

OPERA OMNIA VOL. XI RAIMON PANIKKAR

SACRED
SECULARITY

Opera Omnia

Volume XI

Sacred Secularity

Opera Omnia

I. Mysticism and Spirituality

Part 1: *Mysticism, Fullness of Life*

Part 2: *Spirituality, the Way of Life*

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SERIES FOREWORD

All the writings it is my privilege and responsibility to present in this series are not the fruit of mere speculation but, rather, autobiographical—that is, they were first inspired by a life and praxis that have been only subsequently molded into writing.

This *Opera Omnia* ranges over a span of some seventy years, during which I dedicated myself to exploring further the meaning of a more justified and fulfilled human lifetime. I did not live for the sake of writing, but I wrote to live in a more conscious way so as to help my fellows with thoughts not only from my own mind but also springing from a superior Source, which may perhaps be called Spirit—although I do not claim that my writings are in any way inspired. However, I do not believe that we are isolated monads, but that each of us is a microcosm that mirrors and impacts the macrocosm of reality as a whole—as most cultures believed when they spoke of the Body of Śiva, the communion of the saints, the Mystical Body, *karman*, and so forth.

The decision to publish this collection of my writings has been somewhat trying, and more than once I have had to overcome the temptation to abandon the attempt, the reason being that, though I fully subscribe to the Latin saying *scripta manent*, I also firmly believe that what actually matters in the final analysis is to live out Life, as witnessed by the great masters who, as Thomas Aquinas remarks in the *Summa* about Pythagoras and Socrates (but not about Buddha, of whom he could not have known), did not write a single word.

In the twilight of life I found myself in a dark forest, for the straight path had been lost and I had shed all my certainties. It is undoubtedly to the merit of Sante Bagnoli, and of his publishing house Jaca Book, that I owe the initiative of bringing out this *Opera Omnia*, and all my gratitude goes to him. This work includes practically all that has appeared in book form, although some chapters have been inserted into different volumes as befitting their topics. Numerous articles have been added to present a more complete picture of my way of thinking, but occasional pieces and almost all my interviews have been left out.

I would like to make some practical comments which apply to all the volumes:

1. In quoting references, I have preferred to cite my previously published works following the general scheme of my publications.
2. Subject matter rather than chronology has been considered in the selection, and thus the style may sometimes appear uneven.
3. Even if each of these works aspires to be a self-sufficient whole, some ideas recur because they are functional to understanding the text, although the avoidance of unnecessary duplication has led to a number of omissions.
4. The publisher's preference for the *Opera Omnia* to be put into an organic whole by the author while still alive has many obvious positive features. Should the author outlive the printer's run, however, he will be hard put to help himself from introducing alterations, revisions, or merely adding to his original written works.

I thank my various translators, who have rendered the various languages I have happened to write in into the spirit of multiculturalism—which I believe is ever relevant in a world where cultures encounter each other in mutual enrichment, provided they do not mislay their specificity. I am particularly grateful to Milena Carrara Pavan, to whom I have entrusted the publication of all my written works, which she knows deeply, having been at my side in dedication and sensitivity during the last twenty years of my life.

R.P.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Hindū Scriptures

<i>AV</i>	<i>Atharva-veda</i>
<i>BG</i>	<i>Bhagavad-gītā</i>
<i>BU</i>	<i>Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad</i>
<i>KathU</i>	<i>Kaṭha-upaniṣad</i>
<i>MaitU</i>	<i>Maitri-upaniṣad</i>
<i>MandU</i>	<i>Māṇḍūkya-upaniṣad</i>
<i>Manu</i>	<i>Mānava-dharma-śāstra</i>

Christian Scriptures

<i>1 Cor</i>	<i>First Corinthians</i>
<i>2 Cor</i>	<i>Second Corinthians</i>
<i>1 Jn</i>	<i>First John</i>
<i>1 Pet</i>	<i>First Peter</i>
<i>2 Pet</i>	<i>Second Peter</i>
<i>1 Tim</i>	<i>First Timothy</i>
<i>Acts</i>	<i>Acts of the Apostles</i>
<i>Col</i>	<i>Colossians</i>
<i>Deut</i>	<i>Deuteronomy</i>
<i>Eccles</i>	<i>Ecclesiastes</i>
<i>Eph</i>	<i>Ephesians</i>
<i>Ex</i>	<i>Exodus</i>
<i>Gal</i>	<i>Galatians</i>
<i>Gen</i>	<i>Genesis</i>
<i>Heb</i>	<i>Hebrews</i>
<i>Hos</i>	<i>Hosea</i>
<i>Is</i>	<i>Isaiah</i>
<i>Jas</i>	<i>James</i>
<i>Jer</i>	<i>Jeremiah</i>
<i>Job</i>	<i>Job</i>
<i>Jn</i>	<i>John</i>
<i>Judg</i>	<i>Judges</i>
<i>Lk</i>	<i>Luke</i>

<i>Lev</i>	<i>Leviticus</i>
<i>Mk</i>	<i>Mark</i>
<i>Mt</i>	<i>Matthew</i>
<i>Neh</i>	<i>Nehemiah</i>
<i>Phil</i>	<i>Philippians</i>
<i>Ps</i>	<i>Psalms</i>
<i>Qo</i>	<i>Qohèlet</i>
<i>Rev</i>	<i>Revelation</i>
<i>Rom</i>	<i>Romans</i>
<i>Sir</i>	<i>Sirach</i>
<i>Wis</i>	<i>Wisdom</i>

Others

<i>Ap</i>	<i>Aporias in the Comparative Philosophy of Religion</i>
<i>Denzinger</i>	<i>H. J. D. Denzinger, Enchiridion symbolarum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum, A. Schönmetzer, ed.</i> <i>(Barcinone: Herder, 1973)</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae</i>

INTRODUCTION

*What a transformed life is his,
who finds the sacred in the world,
and creates the hidden path
along which the wise in the world
do walk!¹*

This volume is dedicated to a secularity that is defined as "sacred" inasmuch as it represents the lifestyle to which we are called, thus overcoming the dichotomy between the sacred and the profane.

It is not a question of escaping from the world, but of transfiguring it, which means more than redeeming it; it means resurrecting it. We must "find" the sacred and "create" the secular way. The discovery of *sacred secularity* seems to be the catalyst by which this transformation is not merely a change of habits or a new fad but a historical change. The task is not easy, but it is urgent and also fascinating.

This book is a call to transformation. The transformation of buzzing into silence, of the murmuring of fretful trepidation into the quietening of outer and inner noise is part of the art of living or, in other words, of wisdom. This book aims to present a vision of the world in which, without denying the possible transcendence of the divine, emphasis is placed on the immanence of the sacred in the very bowels of the world. For too long, so-called religion (*religo*) has sought to bind us (*religare*) with a transcendent Being at the expense of the immanence of Being that is within beings, thus causing a split between the being of Man and the Being of all reality. The defense of the world's sacredness presents itself as the "reunification" of these two spheres—without, however, confusing the two. The crisis of an otherworldly religion cannot be resolved by absorbing the worldly into divinity, nor by confusing the divine with the worldly, but only by recognizing and experiencing the intrinsic relationship between these two "dimensions" of reality within Man himself as the point of contact between heaven and earth. I have called this the cosmotheandric vision.

After two centuries of dispute on the opposition between "secular" and "religious" (in a period of time that includes events ranging from the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution to Vatican II, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the science-versus-religion debates), the West is perhaps in a better position than ever before to reflect on the

¹ These verses were inspired, in juxtaposition, by a famous poem written by the great sixteenth-century Castilian poet and mystic Fray Luis de León, who speaks about the worldly din and the joy of retreating from it ("*¡Qué descansada vida / la que hueye del mundanal ruido / y sigue la escondida / senda, por donde han ido / los pocos sabios que han sido en el mundo!*"). Here, however, the lines have been turned into an apology of secularity, emphasizing their complementary, rather than contradictory, attitude.

ultimate meaning of the phenomenon of secularity, taking into account the contributions of the sociology of knowledge and the perspective of a cross-cultural science of religions.² The perspective of this book is purely philosophical in the traditional sense of the term. Philosophy is related above all to wisdom, rather than merely the analysis of conceptual statements. We will, of course, also refer to the contributions of sociology, theology, and Western science, but we will place the issue in a much broader perspective—that of contemporary Man reflecting on his own experience over the last six thousand years of human history. I believe this is the perspective from which we need to begin today to tackle the problems that afflict mankind. If we narrow this perspective, the result will be superficial and incapable of comprehending the current degree of consciousness. If we extend it back to a more ancient prehistory, our inquiry will be more arduous and more controversial at its margins.³

Secularity represents a *novum relativo* in the life of Man on earth. It is bound to a particular experience of time as an *essential* ingredient of *reality*, and therefore also of Man. It is a *novum* that transcends chronologies and cultures and is transformed into a general myth. It is a *novum relativo* primarily because all change is relative,⁴ but also because this experience has existed since time immemorial in the deepest recesses of the human being and had already begun to manifest itself in traditional wisdom.⁵ As human traditions have developed over time, many processes of secularization have taken place, and throughout history there have been many sages (some call them mystics and poets, other scientists and thinkers) who have experienced that the true secular dimension of reality is something that is not transient but permanent, although they have not reduced everything to this dimension. The poets tell us,

We come to the question of time. Do timeless poems exist? "Timeless" is an abstraction, which does not correspond to reality. The two conditions, space and time, are unavoidable requisites of human life. . . . Time with dates, with collective, public history. There also exists time without dates, private, intimate, . . . For now, life constitutes a value on earth. And without time ever stopping.⁶

² It is significant that the anthology of H.-H. Schrey (ed.), *Säkularisierung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1981), one of the best on the subject, begins with the following sentence by the editor: "The question of secularization is basically a question of the relationship between Christianity and the world." Although he recognizes that this is a general problem, most cases occur through contact with the West. As regards the question from a broader perspective, see D. C. Mulder (ed.), *Secularization in Global Perspective* (Amsterdam: VU Boekhandel/Uitgeverij, 1981), which deals with Africa, Brazil, South India, and the Muslim world. We should bear in mind that, although the problem is intercultural, most of the writers are Westerners. To understand better the current situation, it is very important that we begin from a broader perspective. For the history of the word itself, see the still indispensable book by H. Lübbe, *Säkularisierung: Geschichte eines ideenpolitischen Begriffs* (Freiburg: Alber, 1965). For a more complete bibliography, see that compiled by G. Anders, in Schrey, *Säkularisierung*, 415–37.

³ See R. Panikkar, "Is History the Measure of Man? Three Kairiological Moments of Human Consciousness," *Teilhard Review* 16, no. 1–2 (London) (1981/10): 39–45.

⁴ See the statement made by Diadochos of Photiki in the fifth century: "Man does not transform himself into what he was not. He renews himself gloriously into what he (already) was," in M.-M. Davy, *Le Désert intérieur* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1983), 199. This human capacity (*capax Dei*, the Scholastics called it) allows continuity in metamorphosis (which is not a *kata-morphosis*). Transformation is not deformation.

⁵ See A. Mendelson, *Secular Education in Philo of Alexandria* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1982), and the classic W. Jaeger, *Paideia. Die Formung des griechischen Menschen* (Berlin-Leipzig: de Gruyter, 1936–1947), 3 vols.

⁶ J. Guillén, *Guillén on Guillén: The Poetry and the Poet* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 152–53.

But up until today the phenomenon of secularity had not had such a far-reaching effect.⁷ Secularity alone would suffocate Man, but the secular dimension of reality cannot remain in the background if we are to give a true picture of the emerging culture of our time and a more complete idea of what human life is.

Does the man who recognizes that bread for himself is a material question and bread for his neighbour is a spiritual one (N. Berdjajev) belong to a secularized world or to a world that is not secularized but unqualifiable?⁸

Is feeding the hungry (whatever type of hunger it may be) solely either a profane task or a responsibility of "religious" institutions, or is it not rather a task of sacred secularity? In other words, if we reduce the whole of reality to mere secularity (a term as yet to be defined) we suffocate reality by depriving it of its character of infinitude and freedom. At the same time, however, by denying secularity its true and ultimate character, human life is reduced to a mere game with no real importance and with no dignity. Perhaps one of the reasons for the apparently universal crisis of mankind today is that we have failed to create a synthesis between the sacred and the secular.

Perhaps we are coming to another "axial age," but this time it concerns not history, as described by Karl Jaspers, but human life on earth.⁹ The historical age, that is, the human age of predominantly historical consciousness, is coming to an end. Its archetypes, however, remain among us and within us, but other forms of consciousness are destined to gradually replace the period spanning the last six thousand years. I believe, in fact, that historical consciousness, or the myth of history, has begun to be replaced kairologically (not chronologically) by transhistorical consciousness.¹⁰ The phenomenon of secularity is a manifestation of this transformation. The essence of secularity is a peculiar experience of time as a constitutive dimension of *tempiternal reality*.¹¹

I am not referring here to the religiosity of the West from a sociological point of view. Besides the fact that there already numerous studies on this subject, the situation changes almost every ten years and from one country to another. We have an excessive tendency to judge the world according to the parameters of our own particular province.¹² Throughout history there have been many movements of secularity, but in its present form we must not forget that it is a fundamentally Western phenomenon.

Secularity is a cross-cultural phenomenon that is characteristic of our era. Respectfully paraphrasing the term *saeculum senescens* (an ageing world) coined by St. Augustine in *De civitate Dei* at the time of the Roman Empire, we might refer today to a *saeculum emergens*

⁷ M. J. Adler (ed.) makes no mention of the word in all the 102 topics of *The Great Ideas: A Syntopicon of Great Books of the Western World* (London: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952), 2 vols.

⁸ E. Castelli (ed.), *Herméneutique de la sécularisation* (Paris: Aubier, 1976), 15.

⁹ See K. Jaspers, *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1956), 14–32.

¹⁰ See R. Panikkar, "El fin de la historia," in *La intuición cosmoandrina: Las tres dimensiones de la realidad* (Madrid: Trotta, 1999/XXXIII), 103–63.

¹¹ See R. Panikkar, "La Misa como 'consecratio temporis': La tempiternidad," *Sanctum Sacrificium* (Zaragoza) 1961/6: 75–93.

¹² See, for example, the analysis of the North American situation of some years ago in R. N. Bellah and Ch. Y. Glock, eds., *The New Religious Consciousness* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); J. Needleman and G. Baker, eds., *Understanding the New Religions* (New York: Seabury Press, 1978); H. Cox, *Religion in the Secular City: Toward a Postmodern Theology* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984), etc.

(emerging world), but we must also add, perhaps paradoxically, *et necans seipsum* (and self-destructive) if we fail to neutralize the lethal tendencies of the current dominant civilization.¹³

This secularity, which corresponds to ordinary life, has been called "sacred," thereby overcoming the still widespread dichotomy between the sacred and the secular. Of course, the sacred is not the profane, but it can belong equally to secular and to religious life.

* * *

Organizing this book into different themes has proved quite difficult, since they touch on various aspects of secular reality while, however, forming a harmonious whole.

The first section (from which the title of the book is taken) is dedicated to the philosophy of secularity. Here the description of secularity is developed, the sacredness of the secular is analyzed, and some considerations are outlined on the challenge that secularity represents for traditional religions. This is followed by a chapter on the secularity of hermeneutics.

The second section is dedicated to politics as an aspect of life that is not without significance: Man, as we said in the volume dedicated to spirituality, is *sôma*, *psyche*, *polis*, and *kosmos*. As *polis*, it is essential for him to belong to a (political) community. This section includes various articles relating to a sociology that also embraces university education.

The third section, dedicated to peace, includes two books: *Concordia and Harmony*, a collection of articles illustrating how peace can only be the result of secularity lived in sacredness; *Peace and Cultural Disarmament*; and a short unpublished text, *The Church as a Council*, which is highly evocative and extremely relevant for today: a recurring theme in the author's religious vision of the role that the church can and must fulfill in its realization.

The section closes with some writings on *ecosophy*, which, as the word suggests, is the wisdom of the Earth that we must listen to and with which we must make peace. The call to peace, as the key to a harmonious life among the various peoples of the Earth, is a goal that can be achieved individually by overcoming the *ego* and collectively by accepting the plurality of cultures and traditions without any abusing their own position by imposing a single economy, political system, or religion. Is variety, in fact, not the greatest gift we find in nature, and even more so among peoples?

¹³ See the many political, economic, and ecological studies on the current world situation. We live in a world where 80 percent of mankind is forced to make do with less than 5 percent of the worldwide income—and this difference is growing every year.

SECTION I
SECULARITY



Part 1

SACRED SECULARITY

*A Historical Mutation**

*Na saṃsārasya nirvāṇat kiṃcid asti viśeṣajam,
na nirvāṇasya saṃsārāt kiṃcid asti viśeṣajam.¹*

*There is no difference between the secular and the sacred,
there is no difference between the sacred and the secular.*

*Zeit ist wie Ewigkeit und Ewigkeit wie Zeit,
So du nur selber nicht machst einen Unterscheid.²*

*Time is like eternity and eternity like time,
unless you yourself make the difference.*

* Original edition: "Scollarità sacra: Una mutazione storica," in *La realtà cosmoceandrica: Dio-Uomo-Mondo* (Milan: Jaca Book, 2004), 121–82.

¹ Nāgārjuna, *Mula-madhyamaka-kārikā* XXV.19.

² Angelus Silesius, *Der cherubinische Wandersmann* (Il pellegrino cherubico), 1, 47.

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the word "secularity" is not the most suitable to express what is intended. Perhaps a neologism should be coined. I have introduced the expression "cosmotheandric intuition" to express that vision of reality that comprises the divine, the human, and the cosmic as the three constituent elements of reality, without any subordination between them. But here we deal with only a single aspect of this concept, for which I can find no better word than secularity.¹ Everything depends on our capacity to extract its quintessence. I use the word "reality" as the most general and universal symbol of all that *is* or can be. We could compare it to Being, and it includes beings and the possible Source of Being.²

¹ See the very title of B. H. Stappert (1978), which begins with this statement: "Secularity indicates the relationship of faith with the world and the dialectic structure of the human conception of reality which is based on this very relationship." *Weltlich von Gott handeln. Zum Problem der Säkularität in der amerikanischen Theologie und bei Friedrich Gogarten* (Essen: Ludgerus, 1978).

² See Panikkar (1984/25).

SECULARITY

Secularization, Secularism, Secularity

We must distinguish between secularization, secularism, and secularity.¹

Secularization is the historical process whereby religious institutions were deprived of the wealth, power, and rights they had accumulated over the centuries. It is applicable above all to European history, but the phenomenon is also found in other cultures. Its roots are political, and the principal cause is a certain dissatisfaction with institutionalized religion, which is thus stripped of its privileges. "By secularization we intend the process whereby some sectors of society and culture are separated from the domination of religious institutions and symbols."²

Secularization starts from a dualistic vision between the "religious" or "sacred" camp and the worldly, because it is deemed that the former does not belong to the *saeculum* (the world). Secularization is in effect the historical process whereby the acquisitions and the power of the religious institutions are returned to the world, weakening or destroying the privileged position that they had acquired.³ It is significant that many Christian writers have underlined the purificatory and positive effects of secularization⁴—despite the injustices committed in the process.

Secularism, on the other hand, is an ideology that states that the empirical world is all that exists, that transcendence in the vertical sense is a mere illusion of the mind.⁵ This word is applied above all to Western history and it has been used in this sense for more than one hundred years,⁶ but it represents a very widespread phenomenon in the history of civilization.

¹ These distinctions are generally accepted with these or other names. See, for example, Gogarten (1970) and H. Smith (1968), 25–66, 67–93; Vahanian (1976); etc.

² Berger (1969), 107. See Castelli (1976) for a better understanding of the phenomenon.

³ "La sécularisation consiste donc dans le passage d'une compréhension verticale à une compréhension horizontale du monde, à savoir, à une perspective qui considère toute chose, la vie entière, à l'intérieur de l'horizon d'une compréhension rationnelle, mais avec l'exclusion de la religion et de l'Eglise" [Secularization consists, therefore, in the passage from a vertical to a horizontal understanding of the world, to know, to a perspective that considers everything, all of life, to be within the horizon of rational understanding, but with the exclusion of religion and the Church] (Mondin [1976], 465–66)].

⁴ See, for example, Dubarle (1976).

⁵ "De toutes les catastrophes que se sont abattues sur la civilisation occidentale, la sécularisation est de loin la plus grave" [Of all the catastrophes that have befallen Western civilization, secularization is by far the most serious (Brun [1976], 383)].

⁶ See Waterhouse (1920) and his reference to G. J. Holyoake as founder of a movement that used this name in 1851.

Secularism tries to break the dualism that underlies a part of the traditional visions of the world, denying that the transemperical, supernatural, or metarational world has any degree of reality. Secularism asserts that everything is of this world.⁷ The *saeculum* is all that really exists.⁸

Secularity represents the conviction that the *saeculum* belongs to the ultimate sphere of reality.⁹ The *saeculum* is not a subordinate and/or transitory state of Being, insignificant before an eternal, divine, or transcendent universe, but neither is it the only reality. Secularity is neither dualist nor monist, but it implies an *Advaita* or a-dualist vision of reality, traditionally forgotten by many religions. While secularism absolutizes worldly reality, secularity relativizes ultraworldly or "divine" reality. It tries to maintain a balance between being and not-being, eternity and time, world and God, using traditional terminology. According to this conception, for example, there was never a moment when God existed *alone*.¹⁰ God and the world are "contemporaneous." God is a relative being, in relation to the world.¹¹ He is God of the world and for the world—just as the world is of God and for God.

A separate mention is due to the use modern India makes of the word "secular," which is inserted into its Constitution. "Secular State" means that the State is neither a theocracy nor an atheist State, but a government that tolerates every religion, respecting freedom of cults without favoring one religious institution over another—a situation challenged by the recent movement called *hindutva*.

Origins of Secularity

Before describing this definitive aspect of reality, we advise that we are not taking a stance in the debate on the origins of secularity, often inappropriately called "secularization."¹² The origin of secularity is a complex phenomenon and it is greatly studied, above all in the West. An adequate description would deserve an independent essay, which we shall summarize in a single paragraph.

⁷ See a categorical criticism of secularity in W. C. Smith (1984): "Modern secularism is an intellectual error" (18).

⁸ "La sécularisation est le passage—qui s'étend sur de nombreux siècles—d'une interprétation métaphysique de la réalité à une expérience et une interprétation de la réalité où le monde historique, social, humain, fini constitue l'horizon de la responsabilité et de la destinée humaines—... la sécularisation est un processus au cours dequel, les arrière-mondes ayant tous disparu, il ne reste plus que le monde historique, social, humain, fini" [Secularization is the passage—over a number of centuries—from a metaphysical interpretation of reality to an experience and interpretation of reality in which the historical, social, human, and finite world constitutes the horizon of responsibility and of human destiny. . . . Secularization is a process in which the backworlds having all disappeared, there is no longer a historical, social, human, and finite world (Sperma Weiland [1976], 96)].

⁹ See Panikkar (1979/XXII), 58ff.

¹⁰ The creation is not in time, but of time, Christian tradition says, at least since St. Augustine. See Sertillanges (1921).

¹¹ There is a very interesting affirmation of Isaac Newton (1642–1727) at the end of his great *General Scholium*: "God is a relative word," and he underlines that He is the Lord and not the "soul of the world."

¹² See the optimistic and profound description of Voegelin (1956), 126ff., in which he delineates the passage of the "cosmological" human conscience to the "historical" one—that is to say, from an identification with the cosmos to a responsibility toward it.

Secularity may have originated in the Judeo-Christian conception of the world;¹³ in the European Renaissance;¹⁴ in Western industrialization;¹⁵ or in the modern idea of the nation-state;¹⁶ it can be equivalent to the recognition of reason as a fundamental criterion of truth, or it can imply the loss of religious spirit or any sense of transcendence; it can also represent the greatest danger of our time;¹⁷ or simply a transfer from religion to a new space;¹⁸ it can be due to the "Entzauberung der Welt" (disenchantment of the world);¹⁹ or only the Protestant interpretation of the world;²⁰ or other reasons of this kind;²¹ it can represent Man's maturity and have its roots in the Enlightenment²² and parallel movements in other cultures.²³ All these hypotheses on the origins and possible implications of secularity are important and have produced an immense bibliography.²⁴ Indeed, they provide us with an example of the complexity of culture and an introductory key to the phenomenon of contemporary religiosity without which it is difficult to interpret today's world.²⁵

We do not enter into the debate of whether secularity is an anti-Christian phenomenon or the most genuine manifestation of Christian revelation.²⁶ Nor do we embark upon analysis of the Hebrew Bible or the *Veda* to clarify whether the roots of secularity originated in the primordial religious traditions before they were smothered by elitist gnosticism²⁷ or whether secularity is simply innate to a human being.²⁸ As can be understood by this explanation of possible definitions, the question of the origins of secularity is fascinating and complex. However, we avoid defending one particular hypothesis here and concentrate on a more fundamental cosmological and anthropological approach—which does not ignore the problems mentioned.

Etymology

The use of words becomes a matter of political practice, not only theoretical interest. Despite the different use that is made of it, I am reluctant not to consider the word "secularity," because it has a rich etymological history that helps us to discover its most profound meaning.

¹³ See Schillebeeckx (1969), but especially Gogarten (1952), further developed in 1970. See also Berger (1969), 113f.

¹⁴ See Dubarle (1976).

¹⁵ See D. Martin (1978), 2ff.

¹⁶ See Bockenforde (1981).

¹⁷ See the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Declaration of November 1947 (National Catholic Welfare Conference).

¹⁸ See Luckman (1967b).

¹⁹ Weber (1965), 123.

²⁰ See Berger (1969), 113.

²¹ See Greeley (1972, 1982).

²² See Bethge (1955–1956) and Regina (1976).

²³ Historians refer to the reforms of Akhenaton in Egypt or those of Emperor Han in China as examples of secularization. See Pirenne (1948).

²⁴ Cf. two useful examples taken from various theses. One has a North American setting: Marty (1969), 1–32. The other is a description of the vaster European problem: "Einführung" in Schrey (1981), 1–48.

²⁵ Not to upset the harmony of the writing, we preferred not to develop some of the theses mentioned, although each one deserves particular study.

²⁶ See Schlitzer (1969), who summarizes the honest work of Schillebeeckx (1969), saying that Schillebeeckx insisted, "Christ is a secular man. He is not the man of a cult, the sacred man" (vii).

²⁷ See Vergote (1976).

²⁸ See West (1971); Geffré (1976); etc.

The word probably comes from an Etruscan root, the origin of the Latin *saeculum*, which means "temporal world."²⁹

The *aión* has been interpreted as the most characteristic aspect of the world. It could be said that the *aión* is the temporal space of three times: initial, middle, and final.³⁰ It is the cosmic dimension, entwined but not confused with the divine one.³¹ The *saeculum* is not simply what is usually called the world; it is not the mere material *kosmos*, but the living *cosmos*, the vital force of the universe.³² The word "secularity," indebted to this extraordinarily rich tradition, still maintains this hidden nucleus of meaning even in its most everyday uses, when it has been purified of ideological connections. Language is the most profound human document.

This linguistic reference wishes to underline the vital or animist character of reality that the word encompasses.³³ The *saeculum* is neither the geographical *cosmos* nor the human world, but both—forming an indestructible unit. It is the *living universe*, the vital force of the world, unthinkable without Man, its representative and most qualified exemplar.³⁴ This vitality means, evidently, that time is not in decline; that we find ourselves at the dawning

²⁹ It comes directly from the Latin *ser*, *serere* (origin of "seed"), to plant, to sow, and therefore to produce, to generate, to scatter, to plant. Thence comes "generation," "race," and therefore "the longevity of a (human) generation"; and thus also "epoch," "age" (See the Greek *aiών* [*aión*] and the Sanskrit *āyus*), "century." The Hebrew *olam* means both world and time. See 1 Cor 1:20 and 3:18–19, where the parallel *aiών-kόσμος* (*aión-kosmos*, *saeculum-mundum* in the Vulgar Latin) suggests an interesting synonymy. The word is fundamentally temporal. See 1 Cor 2:6–8, where *aiών-* (*aión*) means *χρόνος* (*chronos*), time. The Chinese character *jīng*, vital energy, sperm, also means essence. *Jīng qì* is similar to the Sanskrit *prana*, vital breeze, insofar as it is life-giving energy. See *Tao-te Ching* XVIII.

³⁰ See Maximus the Confessor in *Capita gnostica* I.2 (PG 90.1085): "Beginning-middle-end is the characteristic of the temporal or better of the 'aionic,'" Hans Urs von Balthasar in his study on Maximus (1961), 603, comments after his translation: "This characterization of *chronos* and *aiών* is based on Gregory of Nyssa, who, relying in turn on Aristotle, had described *aiών* as the essence of the finished creature; Maximus differentiates *χρόνος* from *aiών* more radically than Gregory." The text says, "Η ἀρχὴ καὶ ἡ μεσότης καὶ τὸ τέλος, τῶν χρόνων διαιρετῶν εἰδὶ γνωρίσματα" [Latin: "Principium, medium et finis, notae sunt eorum quae tempore dividua (divisa?) sunt"]. When a few lines further down the Greek text says, "δὲ *aiών* δὲ," the Latin version feels obliged to explain, "aevum autem seu saeculum," that is, "aevum (*aión*, 'era'), i.e., century."

³¹ "Ο Θεός, οὐκ ἔστι δι' ἑαυτόν, ὃς ἡμᾶς εἰδέναι δυνατόν· οὔτε ἀρχὴ, οὔτε μεσότης, οὔτε τέλος" [see *De mystica theologia* V], says Maximus in *Capita gnostica* I.2 (PG 90.1084). The Latin translation says, "Deus, sui ipse ratione (quantum nobis scire concessum est) neque principium, neque medium, neque finis est." God, in himself, as far as we can know, is not the beginning, nor the middle, nor the end. "Εἰς Θεός, ἀναρχός, ἀκατάλλητος" [One God, without beginning, misunderstood]. *Deus unus est, principia expers, incomprehens* is the first phrase of this extraordinary text.

³² See Benveniste (1937), where we learn that the Avestan term *āyus*, the Greek *aión*, the Latin *aevus*, *aeternus*, the Gothic *aiws*, etc., which mean age, old age, always, eternity, and similar, not only probably have a relation with the Avestan *yu* (*yavai* = always), both from the Indo-European root *ai-*, but also with the Avestan *yara*, the Sanskrit *yuvan*, and the Latin *juvenis*, which mean young. Benveniste believes that the root *aiw-* originally meant "life force" in its human meaning and not "age" or "life." This would explain why it is youth, *yuvan-*, that possesses life force: "*aiw-* n'est pas la vie qui dure, mais la vitalité exaltée" (110).

³³ The word "animism" should be redeemed from its limited meaning in the history of religions since E. B. Tylor (1832–1917). Also the word "vital" should be recovered from its meaning of merely biological "vitalism" since Hans Driesch (1867–1941).

³⁴ See Gen 1:26.

of our existence; *in the middle of the journey of our life*, in the apogee of life; as the Vedic *r̄si* and the Italian poet said so well:

Ma no madhya ririsat ayur gantob³⁵

Do not damage your *āyus* in the middle of your journey [of your life].

Do not injure, do not let your *āyus* perish halfway through your pilgrimage.

It could also be an interpretation of the Christian fullness of time:

ὅτε δὲ ἥλθεν τὸ πλήραμα τοῦ χρόνου.³⁶

When the fullness of time came.

The *saeculum* is the manifestation of the positive symbiosis between Man and the cosmos. In other works I have tried to outline an integral anthropology that returns to the traditional tripartite anthropology (spirit, soul, body) and that studies the four empirical dimensions of man: *sōma*, *psychē*, *polis*, and *kosmos* (to use the Greek names); *jiva*, *aham*, *ātman*, and *brāhmaṇa* (to use Sanskrit words); or *earth*, *water*, *fire*, and *air* (to use the terminology of primordial traditions). These four dimensions are contained in the Indo-European word *saeculum*, which embodies the *quaternitas perfecta*.³⁷ A cosmotheandrical "anthropology" would also add the *spirit*—but this is not our theme at the moment.

Description

Returning to our conception of secularity, the space/time/matter triad is a fundamental ingredient of reality, something that does not "pass" and disappear in favor of another existence or another reality. It is well known that there is no time without space and that both imply matter. These three factors are interdependent and form corporeity, which is one of the three inter-in-dependent dimensions of (cosmotheandric) reality. In our description of the *saeculum* this temporal aspect should be underlined.

The many uses of the word indicate that what counts is the vital and temporal aspect of reality. There can be different opinions regarding the "metaphysical" value that the secular can have, or regarding how the secular can be integrated in a more complex reality without losing its identity and its consistency, but it is in any case a definitive value. The secular is not what is currently called worldly; it is the indestructible temporal structure of the world.³⁸ As time does not exist without temporal things, secularity includes the reality of material things that extend in time and space—that is to say, the space/time/matter triad.³⁹

³⁵ *RV* I.89.9. Griffith's translation reads, "Break ye not in the midst our course of fleeting life." Geldner translates it thus: "Tut uns mitten auf dem (Lebens) weg am Leben keinen Schaden." *Gantu* means "way" or "passage." See also *RV* III.54.18. I do not think Dante knew the Vedic passage before beginning the *Divine Comedy* I.1: "In the middle of the journey of our life . . ."

³⁶ Gal 4:4.

³⁷ See Panikkar (1985/8; 1999/XXXI).

³⁸ See the Sanskrit *Laukika* for worldly. *Loka* means world, but it underlines what we could call its geographical character. *Loka* is open space, place, kingdom. Many Hindū schools recognize seven worlds.

³⁹ For the notion of matter without references to secularity, but with bases that are enlightening to our argument, once this perspective is opened, see García Bazán (1982). Matter, after all, is what sustains all change. This is the reason that only an unchangeable being does not have matter. See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII.6 (1058) 1071b, 20–21. See also, as an example of the richness of the concept,

Although this notion of secularity is a relative *novum*, it is useful to remember that, ironically, the secular perspective is by no means a novelty for African traditions and for the majority of primordial religions.⁴⁰ The majority of these traditions do not separate space from time and therefore from what they call "world," and they do not even isolate this world from the rest of the universe. Secularity is the scenario in which the destiny of everything that exists is played out. On the other hand, in what are normally called the "great religions," this world is often seen as something secondary or provisional. The difference seems to reside in the fact that the cultures that have not overestimated the role of the mind, and less still that of reason, have a more harmoniously complete (holistic) vital experience—without in any way diminishing the role of the mind.

The Experience of Time

Secularity can perhaps be described as the fruit of a peculiar experience of time. For the Abrahamic religions, time is certainly real and the believer achieves eternal life *in* and *through* the use of time. But the temporal order is provisory; it is only a springboard toward the real eschatological order. "It all ends well" and the vicissitudes that can arise in the interim, above all in history, are considered irrelevant in the ultimate analysis. There will be "a new heaven" and "a new earth," but "there will no longer be time."⁴¹ The optimism of the Abrahamic religions is eschatological. The *eschaton* is what is real. Tragedy is not possible in the temporal world, because it is not definitive. For their part, the Indian religions tend to consider time as an illusory factor, both positive (a means of fulfillment) as in Buddhism, or negative (an obstacle to fulfillment) as in many Hindu spiritualities.⁴² In these cases, reality has little or nothing to do with time.⁴³ Naturally, and paradoxically, realistic mysticism, in the East and the West, constitutes an exception. There is no need to speak of religions that affirm or deny the world to realize that the majority of the "great religions" seem to wish to transcend time.⁴⁴ Even the horizontal eschatology of Marxism wishes to transcend time. The Chinese religions have a very different conception in this regard; they are much more secular.⁴⁵ For this reason, significantly, many authors do not dare (or did not dare) to call them "religions," but rather simple philosophies.

The differences and nuances are clearly very important, but it seems that all these conceptions share the same fundamental attitude regarding time.⁴⁶ Secularism, as we have said, states

Pérez Estévez (1976).

⁴⁰ See Radin (1957); Koppers (1952), etc.

⁴¹ Ap 10:6 (χρόνος οὐκέτι έσται [time will no longer exist])—although the phrase in context has a slightly different meaning.

⁴² For example, the ascetic models of Hinduism and Buddhism with their respective ideals of the *sanyāsin* and the *bhikṣu*.

⁴³ See Panikkar (1979/XXII), 61. As regards the conception of time in different cultures, see UNESCO (1976).

⁴⁴ See Schweitzer (1924) in his division between religions that affirm the world and those that deny it, which so irritated the Indian thinkers such as Radhakrishnan (1960), 156ff., and others. This division naturally contains some prejudices, due to a conception of the world without a critical sense. It is not the same "world" that some religions affirm and others deny.

⁴⁵ See Fingarette (1972).

⁴⁶ Dumont (1982) does not err when he states, "The first Christians were . . . closer to the Indian renouncer than are we, more or less comfortably installed in the world, who believe we have got ourselves sorted out" (8). The "devaluation" of the world (6) is a common feature of Buddha and

that the matter/space/time triad is all that exists. Even secularity affirms the definitive and constituent character of the triad, but without denying the possibility that there could be other dimensions of reality beyond the triad. Secularism reduces the spirit to matter, therefore eliminating all differences, and thus falls into a sort of monism, having reduced reality to a single dimension. Secularity on the other hand does not absolutize the *saeculum*. It only defends its legitimate place in the sphere of the ultimate reality: the *saeculum* must not be relegated, standing aside before what is truly "real," be it called God, Heaven, Brahman, *nirvana*, or anything else.

What is the meaning of time being definitively real? It means that the temporal structures of the world, and especially the temporal events of human life, are not ephemeral moments that leave no lasting mark, nor scaffolding to be eliminated once the building is completed—nor the Buddhist image of the raft that is abandoned once the "other bank" has been reached (which would not be a bank unless there were an opposite bank). Temporal structures are much more than a vestige of the past which man preserves in his memory or in anticipation of the future (a preparation in view of "real life"). They exist by right; they belong to the tissue and the very fabric of reality. Time is real, but not only present time is real. The past and the future are equally real. Time exists, and all times coexist. What has been is just as real as what will be, and both belong to reality. The temporal destiny of Man is indissolubly linked to his eternal destiny and his eternal situation. Temporal values are not only the means to reach other, more elevated ones, but they are also ends in themselves when they are revealed as the empirical face of a *tempiternal* reality. Time should not be confused with history, nor the conscience of time with historical conscience. We have said that the temporal aspect of reality, and therefore of human life, is not simply a means to obtain something more, which depends on a higher entity, but something that has its definitive value in itself—although it is inseparable from the whole (which we have called *cosmotheandric*).⁷

This means that the future is not the end of human life and at the same time that God is not the absolute Future.⁴⁸ Time is not only the future.⁴⁹ Time is also the past and the present, which for us is more important.⁵⁰

Secularity (the experience of time as a definitive value) should not be confused either with the exclusive preeminence of history. Authors who believe that Christianity is the cradle of secularity often defend this opinion, because they have identified secularity

Christ. "Changing the 'world' seems absurd from this perspective" (6). I am not so sure of the lack of cosmic and social conscience in the "great religions," but this is another matter. Here I try to highlight the novelty of secularity.

⁴⁷ This is the vision of time of many mystics. See, for example, Meister Eckhart, *Expositio Sancti Evangelii Secundum Iohannem* I.59.6–10, where time is qualitative, equalized with the word and thus with the “Son” who is continually born in us, a constituent dimension of the human being: “Denying time presupposes time, because time cannot be denied if it is talked about. Talking, however, cannot occur without time” (the passage is taken from Averroë, *Physics* IV, Com. 124). The language, for Eckhart as for Heidegger and so many others, is the symbol par excellence of man as a temporal being.

⁴⁶ See K. Rahner (1965): "The absolute future is only another name for what is designated as 'God'" (80). This phrase should be set in the context of the Christian-Marxist dialogue, and does not have much sense outside it. Another example of the impossibility of a universal language.

⁴⁹ See Park (1978) and especially Izutzu (1978), where time is presented as a field.

⁵⁰ See the transtemporal message of the gospel and its insistence on the supreme value of the present: Do not worry about the future. See Mt 6:25 ($\mu \nu \mu \sigma \nu \sigma \nu \sigma \sigma \sigma$) and the dissolvent of 1 Cor 7:32ff.

with historical conscience and Christianity with history⁵¹—identifying Christianity with *cristiania*.⁵²

The phrase "God works in history" describes a common conception in certain Christian circles. From a different perspective, this statement could appear erroneous or even blasphemous. If history is the work of God, we have a truly cruel and inhuman God. To say that God acts in history is a statement of the victors, of the survivors, of the privileged who can afford to utter a phrase of this kind. What about the millions and millions of victims of human cruelty and injustice? Who does this God work for? For the millions of people who die every year of malnutrition? For the millions of victims of the technological wars of this century? For those who fight in all the wars that at this moment are tearing apart the planet? For whom? Evidently for those who, well fed and safe, have taken possession of God, like the soldiers of the Spanish "Reconquista" ("Holy Mary!" was their war cry); the crusaders ("Dieu le vault" [God willing]; the Central Europeans ("Gesta Dei per frances") [Acts of God for the French]; the Nazis ("Gott mit uns" [God with us]; or the Americans ("In God we trust"). Where is the God of the hundreds of holocausts of human history? It is not necessary to quote the book of Job. Perhaps Nietzsche was right when he said that Christianity is (also) for slaves, for the victims (of history).

According to this conception of an absolutely transcendent God, whereby the sense of human life resides in a transcendent afterlife, the undeniable historical fact that religions have practiced and even preached war is not as scandalous as it could appear to a secular mentality. After all, killing a body is not an absolute evil, given that all the victims mentioned will probably go to heaven before their executioners and maybe even before the victors—if the latter have fought with a clear conscience and for a just cause. Let's not comment. "God is on the side of the strongest battalion," the Greeks said.

In truth, God does not work in history. History is not God's field of action. Maybe God acts in the intimate recesses of human souls, offering them peace and consolation even in the most difficult historical situations. But history certainly is not the revelation of God. It could perhaps be so for Hegel, for the Israelis, for the Arabs, or for this or that people, but a tribal God, even if he has perhaps been the Christian God, certainly is not the God of the gospel—who sends down rain on the just and on the sinners. Jesus was a victim of history, not its Lord. If his kingdom had been in this world, he would have fought not to be sentenced to death.⁵³

This God does not exist. As we will see, today history has become what cosmology was for the more traditional cultures: the framework within which human efforts are made. In reality it is a very tight framework! I have already spoken elsewhere of the myth of history.

⁵¹ Mondin (1976): "Le christianisme n'est essentialement rien d'autre qu'une histoire (et pour le chrétien, il est l'histoire par excellence) des rapports du sacré absolu avec le monde et l'homme, et il est donc inconcevable sans la reconnaissance du sacré absolu. Par conséquent, parler dans la sphère du christianisme de la mort de Dieu, comme l'ont fait les théologiens radicaux, est une absurdité énorme, impardonnable" [Christianity is essentially nothing but a story (and for the Christian, it is the ultimate story) of the relationship of the sacred Absolute with the world and with man, and it is therefore inconceivable without gratitude for God. As a result, speaking in the Christian world of the death of God, as the radical theologians do, is huge, unforgivable nonsense] (471). And also: "La plus belle vérité chrétienne est sans doute celle-ci: tout le profane est destiné à devenir la demeure du sacré sans cesser d'être soi-même. La divinisation à laquelle aspiraient les Grecs, devient dans le christianisme une vérité splendide" [The most beautiful truth of Christianity is undoubtedly this: every layman is destined to become the home of the sacred without ceasing to be himself] (473).

⁵² See Panikkar (2003/XXXII), 155–68.

⁵³ See Jn 18:36.

Cosmic Trust

The most revolutionary aspect of secular mentality is the crisis it produces in cosmic trust, which was fundamental in almost all the traditional religions.⁵⁴ According to the traditional conception, we live in a cosmos—that is to say, in a well-established order, in a universe governed by *rta*, by God, by Providence, by *pratityasamutpāda*. We can trust in an order of things and also in the social structures that represent the order of the cosmos. The conservative function of religious institutions is well known.⁵⁵ Children trust their parents, the governed trust the governors, peasants trust the earth, citizens trust the law. Everything is hierarchical: to disobey "superiors" is to disobey God, says St. Paul.⁵⁶ It is clear that there are transgressions, infidelity, betrayals, exploitation, and other things of this kind, but they are always perceived as such. It is for this reason that there exist prisons, castes, wars. . . . There are masters, gurus, and false prophets, but the idea remains that discipline and hierarchy are necessary, because they form part of the very nature of reality. *Oboedientia tutor* was a religious axiom: "Obedience is the safest thing." He who obeys does not err.⁵⁷ The Christian can try to become a child, because there is a heavenly Father;⁵⁸ the Buddhist can renounce his worries, because he does not need to think about really entering the real world; the Hindū can avoid worrying, because the real already looks after itself, and so on. There seems to exist a basic trust in the order of reality. *Natura medicatrix*.

Modern secularity has shattered this trust. It is necessary to deal with everything personally and to be critical before once again placing our trust in something. It needs to be clear that the social order may be nothing more than opium, offered by the powers that be to maintain their dominion. To accept that things are as they are and not to intervene, to allow that things are as they present themselves to us without actively intervening and without practicing a critical analysis is at the very least naïve and, at most, irresponsible. Rebellion can be a virtue and disobedience an obligation. Our free will has surpassed the threshold of individualist anthropology. Life no longer concerns only psychology; it has ceased to be a private matter, where it counted above all that one knew how to make the right decisions. Life has now assumed cosmic proportions and a personal value that nobody can delegate to others—not even to God.⁵⁹ The future (and not just "our" future) depends on us. The

⁵⁴ See the last chapter, "The Secularization of the Sacred," in Campbell (1969), 193–226. This phrase "suggests an opening of the sense of religious awe to some sphere of secular experience" (193).

⁵⁵ Reaching extremes, as Katz has written (1983), regarding "The 'Conservative' Character of Mystical Experience," attempting to reveal "the two-sided nature of mysticism, that it is a dialectic that oscillates between the innovative and traditional poles of the religious life" (3–4). Katz demonstrates that the contributions of sociology of the conscience also serve mysticism.

⁵⁶ See Eph 6:5; Col 3:20–22; etc.

⁵⁷ It is said that St. Francis sent two novices to plant vegetables with their roots in the air and their leaves in the earth. The first did what he had been told; the second planted the vegetables the right way up, and St. Francis sent him home, saying that he would have made a good farmer, but that he was looking for a good monk. I have explained elsewhere the notion of an "obedientiality," that is, the discovery of the *reasons* for obeying (overcoming one's one will, believing in miracles) despite not understanding the (rational) content of the order.

⁵⁸ A contemporary Christian theologian such as Hans Küng seems to base all his attitude on the free decision to trust reality. See Küng (1982), 78 and 226ff.

⁵⁹ It is said that St. Teresa, before the reform of the Carmelite order, when the elections for the new prioress were approaching, realized that if she had taken on the role, her reform would have been more effective and less violent. In prayer she confided this thought to the crucifix. In her fervor, she clearly

destiny of the world is, at least partially, in our hands. There is no reason for God necessarily to have to intervene: cosmic order is not a certainty. The passing of time does not have the final guarantee of a consolatory eschatology. Not only can an individual fail in life, but the entire universe can blow up, disappear, or collapse. The atomic bomb can destroy the entire planet. Our responsibility cannot be derogated. Prayer without action can simply be a form of anesthesia.

Man cannot live without a certain trust, but this trust begins in us and is never a certainty. The *saeculum* is not a stable and solid rock like a Supreme Being.⁶⁰ Secularity takes ontonomy and "second causes"—to use scholastic terminology—seriously.

Secularity and Modernity

We must distinguish between secularity and modernity. Evidently the concept of modernization is relative. Any individual, institution, or culture can bring to completion a process of modernization. Modernity, unlike what is often believed, does not clash with tradition. It all depends on what is meant by modernity and tradition.⁶¹ Frequently, the peculiar phenomenon of our times is called "modernity"—above all in the West and therefore under the influence of the "Western spirit."⁶² This leads us to wonder whether modernization implies Westernization, a problem that in other parts of the world can assume a painful importance.⁶³

Although secularity and modernity are closely related, we must not confuse the more profound and vast phenomenon of secularity with that of modernity. In the contemporary world, movements of modernity with integralist and ultraconservative tendencies are beginning to appear. They are modern, but not typically secular. However, most of the characteristics of modernity reveal the impact of secularity.⁶⁴ It has been stated more than once that modernity begins with the experience of time as a limited entity.⁶⁵ When does Man feel he has no more

heard the words of Christ reassuring her of her appointment. Teresa therefore omitted doing anything about her candidature. The elections came, but she was not elected. She then went to unburden herself before the crucifix, complaining that she had been misled and that this had made her call into question all her spirituality. Again she heard the words of Christ coming from the crucifix: "Teresa, I wanted you to be elected, but the nuns didn't!" As was probably already said at the time of Teresa, "Trust the Madonna and do not run away [before the 'bull']!" "and that way he will gore you."

⁶⁰ It is said that the great Śaṅkara one day was strolling in a wood with some disciples, when they encountered a furious elephant. The master ran and climbed up a tree. When the danger had passed, the disciples were dismayed and asked him why he had run away in that manner since all this world is *māya* [appearance], as he claimed. Śaṅkara replied that he knew that, but perhaps the elephant did not.

⁶¹ See the absolutely unambiguous thesis of Rudolph and Rudolph (1967): "The belief that modernity and tradition radically contradict each other is based on an incomplete diagnosis of tradition as it occurs in traditional societies, an erroneous understanding of modernity as it occurs in modern societies, and a misunderstanding of their relationship." See also Werblowski (1976) for a radical criticism of both concepts.

⁶² See Berger (1977).

⁶³ Cf., among others, the observations of W. C. Smith (1984). As regards India, see Mandelbaum (1970), Latouche (1989), Myrdal (1968), and, for a concrete example of postindependence optimism, Mayer (1958).

⁶⁴ Cox (1984) identifies "five pillars of modernity" (183): sovereign national states, science-based technology, bureaucratic rationalism, profit maximization, and secularization and trivialization of religion.

⁶⁵ "This calculating with time began in the moment that Man was suddenly seized by the worry [*Un-Ruhe*] of not having any more time. This moment indicated the beginning of modernity [*Neuzeit*] " (Heidegger [1954], 41).

time? Only when time is linear and at the same time external to Man. It does not recede; it is independent of Man's life. Time has ceased to be a personal liturgy in which one's own time is joined to cosmic time and temporality. The classic liturgies shape time.⁶⁶ The end of time has ceased to be the end of personal life because time is no longer interiorized as part of our being or as if the very rhythm of existence did not surround us as its essential part.⁶⁷ Thus begins the fight with scarcity.⁶⁸ Time is brief, scarce.⁶⁹

According to a different interpretation from that of a Pauline context, this statement implies three presuppositions. The first is that time is external to us, whether it is a question of an objective fact or a subjective category—even if it is founded on the perception of something objective. The second is the quantification of time.⁷⁰ The third is the hypothesis that our world is finished.⁷¹ We are obsessed by time, but time no longer belongs to our being: it has almost been reduced to an object, goods. This "time" is external to us; it is linear and it never recedes in a circular way; its measuring is, in the final analysis, a technical matter. We work for a certain number of hours and thus a close relationship is established between work and time. Salaries are agreed on the basis of the number of work hours during which it is imagined that we have produced a certain quantity of value, energy, goods, means of subsistence. These two ideas go together. Time is the quantity that measures our lives, a limited or rather scarce quantity. The need to produce more simply means producing in more of a hurry, that is, it means the need for acceleration. Time is the measure of production. This is what technology is about. Perhaps it is worth reflecting on the diverse experience of time in technological modernity. "Time is money" may be an exaggeration, but certainly work is measured in relation to time, and time in relation to work. The day is divided between working hours and the rest. The former are the productive hours. Man becomes a cog in the working machine.

In the Constitution of the Second Spanish Republic, the nation is defined as a "republic of workers." It is enough to quote Marx for his conception and criticism of work as a means of production of which the product is the benchmark—and the value. This mentality leads directly to give value to acceleration, thanks to which we work, that is, we produce more.

⁶⁶ See Panikkar (1970/XI).

⁶⁷ From this point of view Christian eschatology acquires a new meaning. The end of the world is not simply a cosmic catastrophe. It is above all an anthropological fact. Expressed in terms of Christian catechism, the "particular judgment" and the "universal judgment" coincide. Both after the former and after the latter we leave time. It is not therefore necessary to "await" either the resurrection or the condemnation (to nonbirth).

⁶⁸ We are reminded of the greatest preoccupations of Ivan Illich, who gives a critical assessment of our modern situation. See Illich (1970) and his numerous successive writings.

⁶⁹ See 1 Cor 7:29.

⁷⁰ Mumford (1963) writes, "The application of quantitative methods of thought to the study of nature had its first manifestation in the regular measurement of time; and the new mechanical conception of time arose in part out of the routine of the monastery." It refers to the introduction of the clock in the life of monasteries. We are in the thirteenth century and Mumford writes later, "The bells of the clock tower almost defined urban existence. Time-keeping passed into time-serving and time-accounting and time-rationing. As this took place, Eternity ceased gradually to serve as the measure and focus of human actions." While in the human organism 'time' is measured not by the calendar, but according to the facts which occupy it" (12ff.).

⁷¹ See the descriptions of the birth of the modern age in Koyré (1958). For a contrast with the visions of tradition, cf. Nilsson (1920).

The characteristic of modern science is acceleration, a notion that was not formulated until the seventeenth century.⁷² It is not a coincidence that one of the "fathers" of scientific modernity, Galileo Galilei, studied the phenomenon of acceleration.⁷³ "Gain time" is a slogan of modernity. Nowadays we tend to accelerate everything, not only transport and, as far as possible, psychic processes, but even life—forgetting that when we pass a certain threshold the cosmic rhythms are broken. The "new science" claims the power to break natural rhythms.⁷⁴ Modern Man has come to believe that this intervention is positive, because he apparently believes that nature is the enemy of Man and that Man should subjugate it. This is how the alienation of Man toward nature began. The next step is the exploitation of the latter.

It should be clear that when we speak of secularity as a *novum* we do not refer only to the merely sociological, generally ethnocentric, perspective of the Western élites. If we want to keep the discussion at a certain level of analysis, what we sustain cannot be confuted by citing/pleading/alleging the return of every type of integralism, sects, and some new religions.⁷⁵ On the contrary, most of these modern phenomena also belong to what I have called secularity. Many of these movements underline the importance of the body, the consistency of matter, and the value of time, and have an affirmative attitude toward the world. Furthermore, many of these movements, with greater or lesser success, try to combine modern values with those of traditional religions. A certain ecological conscience is penetrating almost everywhere, and the notion of *ecosophy* is gradually gaining ground.⁷⁶ There is therefore an ambivalence in all that the winds of secularity bring with them. So we must discriminate. We deal with this in the following chapter.

⁷² See Panikkar (1964/1), esp. 198–99. "The very concept of acceleration . . . was not formulated until the XVIth century" (Mumford [1963], 22).

⁷³ See de Santillana (1955).

⁷⁴ See Hartcollis (1983) as a reference among the many possible ones.

⁷⁵ See Needleman and Baker (1978), Lanczkowski (1974), and Cox (1984).

⁷⁶ See Panikkar (1993/XXXIV).

The SACRALITY OF THE SECULAR

It seems that in the secular vision there exists a certain internal dialectic. The secular attitude nearly always originates as a reaction to the excessive domination of the ultra-worldly values of attitudes considered "purely" religious. The process is sufficiently well known. A secular reaction emerged against the heteronomous domination of the principal religious institutions. However, secularity, abandoned to its internal dialectic, soon realizes that it needs a more solid foundation and that it is not enough simply to oppose "theocracies" of every kind. The simple fact that what is discussed is "civil," "implicit," and even "secular" religion clearly demonstrates the human need for what can be called "the sacred."¹ Secularity thus transforms itself into sacred secularity when it aspires to justify its fundamental principles.

The Sacred

We will not now open the Pandora's box of the sacred.² We resort to this term only as a symbol to express the experience of that pole of reality that cannot be totally reduced to the empirical.³ The sacred is meta-empirical, unless a mystical *empeiria* is admitted. The sacred is in dialectical opposition to the profane; it is not an objective condition of things, but depends on its supposed mediatorial function.⁴ It is a mediator between the human sphere and the kingdom of God, the mysterious, the transcendent, and it is transmitted by human conscience.⁵ Despite Man's constant attempts to manipulate the sacred, the sacred is precisely what resists this manipulation.⁶ The center of gravity of the sacred is not in Man. The magic lies precisely in the attempt to manipulate the sacred.

¹ See Comte (1830), Rousseau, Voltaire, Luckman (1967), Bellah (1968 and 1975), Greeley (1982), and Ries (1978) as modern authors who have spoken of "civil religion."

² See the now classic Otto (1963 [1917]) and the indispensable chapter "Le Sacré," in Benveniste (1969), 2:170–207. Benveniste underlines the double character: "ce qui est chargé de présence divine" [that which is charged with divine presence], on the one hand, and "ce qui est interdit au contact des hommes" [that which is forbidden to be in contact with men] on the other.

³ See the wealth of material in Ries (1983).

⁴ See Bouillard (1974), where the following surprising phrase appears: "Le sacré est un élément du profane, dans lequel, au sein d'un contexte social et historique donné, retentit pour l'homme le divin" [The sacred is an aspect of the profane which, within a given social and historical context, sounds to man like the divine] (43). I believe what the author calls profane is what we call secular here.

⁵ "Objects and facts are *established* as sacred symbols by virtue of a religious attitude" (Dupré [1968], 79, and Dupré [1972]).

⁶ See Vesci (1985) as an example of the power and the persistence of the sacred, and Bolle (1965).

The first characteristic of the sacred is that of being the most real thing.⁷ When the sacred opposes something, the opposition implies that the highest degree of reality belongs to the sacred.⁸ The sacred is after all what is *real*: God, heaven, *nirvaya*, Brahman, my village, my children. . . . Even the enemies of the sacred contest its existence precisely because they reject the claim that the sacred is the most essential aspect of the real. They would not oppose it—rightly or wrongly—if the sacred let itself be treated as a parapsychological phenomenon.

Sacred secularity will say therefore that the secular is real and that its degree of reality is primordial. The notion of secularity derives from the experience that the life of the world (the matter/space/time triad) belongs to the ultimate condition of Being—and is therefore sacred. The *saeculum* itself, and not only that which it can bring or indicate, is “real,” that is to say, sacred.

Sacrality, in the strict sense of the word, is originally a Semitic notion. For an Abrahamic mentality the sacred is the segregated, that which is kept to one side, reserved for sacred persons, that is, the priests. Jahvè (YHWH) is godly par excellence because He is separated, segregated, different, totally Other (*aliud*).

Sacrality in the broadest sense is therefore that character of the real that tends to be identified with separation and segregation: that is, that infinite and divine aspect of every being, or what is most real about it.

The Sacred, the Secular, and the Profane

Nobody has the monopoly on the meaning of words, but it is indispensable to specify the use we attribute to them. We have tried to identify the field of the secular and the sacred, but many modern writers do not distinguish the secular from the *profane*. As the word suggests, the *pro-fanum* is that enclosure, not generally limited, found before the *fanum*, the temple as dwelling place of the Gods and privileged place of the sacred—as the sacred finds itself “segregated” from profane use.

We share the meaning of profane as the opposite of sacred; we do not however accept that the meaning of secular is the same as profane, and we extend the meaning of sacred beyond its usual limits.

Sacred secularity does not deny the dialectic between the sacred and the profane.⁹ On the contrary, this dialectic functions within the realm of secularity. But the secular should not be confused with the profane.¹⁰ The profane and the sacred form one polarity. However,

⁷ See Eliade (1958): “Sacrality is above all that is *real*.” This idea appears in all Eliade’s work: the “object [of religion] is *sacred*,” “the sacred is not a state in the history of the conscience, it is a structural element of this conscience,” “it is the experience of a reality and the source of an awareness of existing in the world,” “for me, the sacred is always the revelation of the real, an encounter with what saves us since it gives a sense to our existence.” Phrases repeated in Eliade (1969).

⁸ “The sacred always manifests itself as a reality of a completely different order from ‘natural’ realities” (Eliade [1965], 10).

⁹ “Secular theologians state that modern man must seek the sacred in and through the profane. If this means that for our secularized contemporaries the road to the sacred leads through the *consciousness* of the secular as profane, the statement is undoubtedly true. But if it means that the secular itself has become sacred, it is false. When the distinction between current reality (profane) and ultimate reality (sacred) disappears, the dialectic of the sacred, and therefore religion itself, ceases to exist” (Dupré [1968], 90). Cf. on the same matter, the radical vision of Altizer (1979).

¹⁰ “The secular, that is the profane conceived as a completely independent sphere of existence from the sacred, seems to be a recent Western concept,” says Dupré (1968), 81. In this sense, I recover the

the secular can be sacred and profane at the same time. Secularity is sacred when, presenting a character of ultimateness, which is impossible to manipulate, it acts as a mediator between the "divine" and the human and does not retreat into itself. It is profane when it eliminates this polarity and believes itself to be completely self-sufficient. That is what we have called secularism.

The identification of the secular with the profane derives from the unjustifiable identification of the sacred with the ultraworldly. Here lies the key to many misinterpretations.

We need to distinguish the two notions carefully.¹¹ The secular is not only the profane, and the sacred does not only mean the same as the "supernatural," the eternal, the ultraworldly.

Sacred secularity, for one reason or another, has characterized the attitude of many poets and thinkers who have experienced the ultimate reality of worldly things without reducing them to the empirically given. It opposes the dichotomy that supports the cosmovision of dualists: time now and eternity later, earth below and heaven above, the creation here and the creator there, suffering in this world and happiness in the next, and so on. It seeks to overcome dualism without falling into monism; it distinguishes but does not separate. The formulae *samsāra/nirvāya*, *ātman/brāhma*, *theopoiēsis/theos*; the phrases "participants of divine nature," "in Him we move, live, are"; hypostatic union, Incarnation, the nature of the Buddha, and so on all point in the same direction: secular values are sacred. We use the word *tempiernity* to express the intuition of the experience of reality as temporal and eternal, not diachronically or ontologically separate.¹² Time and eternity are the two sides of the same coin, warp and weft of the same fabric of reality—though they must not be confused. The classic doctrines of the *dharma* (the body of the *dharma*—and this *dharma* indicates the transcendental Buddha), of the *corpus Christi mysticum* (the total body of Christ—in the process of growing), of the world as a body (*śarīra*) of Brahman, and so on—all these intuitions originate from similar experiences: they are "homeomorphic equivalents."¹³ Sacred secularity unites the most traditional conceptions of many religious traditions: "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven."¹⁴ "On earth as in heaven."¹⁵ The two realms are essentially inter- and intradependent; more than that, they are really *inter-in-dependent*, and for this reason there is freedom in the world.

more original meaning of secular beginning from more ancient concepts, not the synonym of profane. In fact, the Christianity of Boniface VIII displays an "incarnational" link between secular and sacred. Cf. the *Unam sanctam* bull of Boniface VIII (1302), which underlines the absolute universality and unity of the Church and the subjugation of the temporal order to the spiritual: "A single and unique body of the Church . . . In its power it has two swords, the spiritual and the temporal. . . . Therefore the two are under the power of the Church, which is a spiritual sword and a material one." It is not up to us to comment on this unfortunate bull. We present it as an extreme example of the conviction (in this case theocratic—which we absolutely do not defend) that the secular can be sacred. See Denzinger (1967), §873.

¹¹ Here I put into perspective the opening sentence of Eliade (1958), which places the profane and the secular on the same level (having given a perfect description of the sacred): "All the definitions of the religious phenomenon which have been given until now have one thing in common: they all have their way to show that the sacred life and the religious life are the opposite of profane and secular life." My thesis wishes to distinguish the religious from the sacred and particularly free the secular from the profane.

¹² See Panikkar (1975/12).

¹³ See Panikkar (2000/XXVII).

¹⁴ Mt 16:19; 18:18; etc.

¹⁵ Mt 6:10.

Monistic Sacralization and Dualistic Autonomy

We have spoken of sacred secularity as a relative *novum*, inasmuch as there have been theocracies, monistic visions, and political regimes that—with the excuse that everything is sacred—have destroyed the ontonomy of various orders of reality.¹⁶ But this is certainly not the secularity that we are describing; it is not sacred secularity, but totalitarianism, theocracy, fascism, and dictatorship of one kind or another. We should not ignore these abuses and the distortion of monistic sacralizations by the right or the left. They have destroyed authentic secularity, identifying it with a rigid monolithic order that has none of the ambivalence or freedom of the authentically sacred.

Monistic regimes wearing a religious mask and, more recently, in other disguises, political and economic, have unleashed the reaction of the autonomy of the profane.

The danger of a monistic attitude is real. This is how the dialectic between sacred and profane is denied, and a single order dominates human life. If ontonomic polarity is not respected, a single power dominates all. Everything is equally important, and issues of the *polis* are the only thing that matters. God becomes Caesar or Caesar is deified. This is the real danger, as is abundantly demonstrated by history: either the domination of the sacred by the profane, or the sacralization of the profane by the sacred. The reaction of many reformist religious movements against the sacralization of profane human activities is understandable. Condemnation of this heteronomous order is justified.

The history of Western Christianity is a typical example of this dialectic. Christianity began with a movement of secularization interpreted as desecration. It is sufficient to read the many words of Jesus against the holy rites of Judaism in his time, in the proclamation that the Sabbath is made for Man and not the contrary.¹⁷ The first Christians were considered atheists, because it did not seem that the divine entirely imbued their lives. They were strongly centered on the *anthropos*. It seemed incredible to Plotinus that Christians considered themselves superior to the stars.¹⁸ The heavens were considered superior creatures. Belief in the Incarnation changed this conception. Christians were instead secularists. This is what permitted the majority of the early Christians to be conscientious objectors in a regime in which service to Caesar was service to God and vice versa.¹⁹ After Constantine this situation began to change, and the temporal structures were sacralized to the point of the conception of the *Sacrum Imperium*.²⁰ The Reformation sought to "demythologize," but the result was only partial. Politics and religion cannot be separated nor identified.²¹ The two extremes are

¹⁶ See Panikkar (1953/3); for the notion of ontonomy, applied in many of my writings, see Panikkar (1979/XXII), 102–5, etc. By *ontonomy* we mean that middle way between *heteronomy* and *autonomy*, that is, the intrinsic law (*nomos*) to the being (*on*), a middle way between the domination of the other (superior) who imposes his law on the inferior (*heteronomy*) and autonomy or independence between the various spheres of the Being.

¹⁷ Mt 12:1ff.; 15:1ff.; 23:23ff.; Mk 2:23ff.; Lk 6:1ff.; 11:37ff.; Jn 5:9ff.

¹⁸ See the pungent expression of St. Jerome: "Man does not exist for the stars, but the stars were made for Man," with obvious reference to the astrology of his times and the preeminence of Man in creation, in Panikkar (1963/VI), 130.

¹⁹ See Prümm (1939) for a general overview. See also H. Rahner (1961), where there appear the bluntest documents of the first centuries of Christianity. The first edition came out suddenly before the end of the war, in 1943, with the title *Abendländische Kirchenfreiheit*. See more recently Cadoux (1982), who minimizes the importance of the break in the Christian attitude that occurred after Constantine.

²⁰ See Dempf (1929).

²¹ See Panikkar (1978/2; 1999/XL).

mortal. The present-day world is rightly concerned about theocratic dictatorships, be they Islamic, communist, liberal, economic, or even "democratic." It is clear that the monistic sacralization of the profane leaves less space for its autonomy compared to when the sacred was limited to the ultraworldly, the supernatural, and the transcendent.

But it is equally obvious that the dualism between secular and sacred is also dangerous. Beginning from this dichotomy of the separation of orders we are absolutely free to render unto Caesar politics, science, technology, art, and all other human activities—because apparently God does not meddle with Caesar. While it is said that religion is above all human matters, this second conception affirms that it is separate from them. Priests, for example, as creatures specifically ordained for divine worship, should not interfere in politics; Jerusalem has nothing to do with Athens, according to Tertullian's misinterpreted and famous phrase.²² Under such a regime, power of this world has nothing to do with any religion. Religion is only useful for "the salvation of the soul" and only has value in the "sublime" sphere of the divine. In this way, it leaves the field free for exploitation of the land, the poor, the weak, and other cultures.²³ Criticism in Christian terms consists in demonstrating that the justice of the gospel (*dikaiosyne*)²⁴ is simultaneously (political) justice and (religious, state of grace) justification.

But one extreme does not justify the other, and neither can "throwing the baby out with the bathwater" be a convincing solution. Life is one, and the so-called two realms are closely intertwined. Sacred secularity will defend the character of the ultimateness of the temporal, as well as the inseparable nature of the two realms, but it will also see the need that they be distinguishable. The relation here is neither monistic nor dualistic, but *Advaita*, of a-duality.

When secularity is seen as sacred, even *autonomy* breaks down. There no longer exist two independent realms. The temporal is also religious and the sacred is also secular. The two realms are inter-in-dependent. Even the regime of the *polis* becomes important for the ultimate sense of human life. The existence of slavery, colonialism, political injustice, and economic exploitation is no longer a purely profane and technical question without a direct repercussion on the ultimate destiny of the human being. Sacred secularity introduces into the human world the sense of tragedy that was intended classically when the Gods intervened from on high in human matters without the possibility of dialogue. Sacred secularity does not reject the Gods, but neither does it place them on an inaccessible and transcendent Olympus; rather it brings the Gods back into the *human* arena. The destiny is common to all. We are God's fellow workers, said St. Paul: *synergoi*.²⁵ Everything depends on the type of Gods. A person's dignity changes into an ultimate aspect and therefore is not a means for any other thing. Sacred secularity ensures that human problems are ultimate. Perhaps some human conflicts cannot be resolved other than by an ultimate sacrifice, a tragedy.

When secularity is seen as sacred, *heteronomy* is also broken. The so-called religious realm can no longer dictate the political lines to the so-called profane realm. The sacred can no longer shelter in an Olympian world and stay silent when slaves are walked upon,

²² See Panikkar (1994/43).

²³ See Cox (1984) and Gutiérrez (1973), above all in his analysis regarding the weakness of the model of the "distinction of levels" (63–77). There no longer exist two hermetically isolated cities, one reserved to the divine and the other to the *polis*: the "frontiers between the life of faith and temporal works, between the Church and the world, are more elastic" (72). There is only "a single vocation for salvation" (*ibid.*). It certainly is not a regime like that of Boniface VIII. See in this sense Gutiérrez (1973b and 1993), a book that is more historical than devotional, despite its title.

²⁴ See Rom 10:4; Mt 6:33; 2 Tim 4:8; 1 Pet 2:24; etc.

²⁵ 1 Cor 3:9.

gypsies persecuted, Jews driven out, communists eliminated, "noblemen" condemned, the poor exploited. But the voice of the sacred can no longer enjoy a superior authority. Perhaps there can be "two swords" (to continue the unhappy example), but one is not superior to the other—and both must put away their respective weapons and pass from the *arena* of inhuman war to the human *agori* of dialogue.

The Two Conceptions of the Sacred

This leads us to one of the central points of this study: *Advaita*, *ontonony*, *pratityasamutpāda*, *perichorēsis*, the interconnection of everything, the trinity, the cosmotheandric vision.²⁶

There exist two fundamental conceptions of the sacred: the dualistic one and the a-dualistic one. The monistic interpretation does not count, because if everything is sacred there is nothing that is "non-sacred" and sacrality is a category that includes everything. The tensions and polarities would pass to some subcategory, to start from scratch.

The Dualistic Conception

The dualistic conception of the sacred, which was dominant in the Abrahamic traditions, will consistently defend the fact that only God is sacred.²⁷ All the rest, the universe, is not sacred but it is called to become holy—at least the human being benefits from this possibility.²⁸ Mountains, rivers, trees, animals, temples, actions . . . in themselves are not sacred.²⁹ All this is profane and must feel enormous awe before the *numinosum*, *fascinans*, *tremendum* et *mysterium*.³⁰ This fear of God is the highest wisdom, peace, and the perfection of creatures.³¹ There can be consecrated objects of worship, more or

²⁶ This *radical relativity* seems to be the common intuition of the great thinkers. Cf. the terseness of Abhinavagupta: *svāvam svāvamakam*, or the no less concise *quodlibet in quolibet* of Nicholas of Cusa.

²⁷ See Davy (1983) "1° Dieu est sacré—2° De ce fait, le monde n'est pas sacré, il est profane. Rien de ce qui est créé n'est sacré" [1] God is sacred—2) If this is so, the world is not sacred, it is profane. Nothing that is created is sacred] (37). And the author continues, "Il existe une différence fondamentale entre le sacré et la sainteté. Dieu est sacré et il ne partage pas son caractère sacré. Par contre, il est saint et il communique sa sainteté" [A fundamental difference exists between the sacred and the holy. God is sacred and he does not share his sacred character. On the contrary, he is holy and he communicates his holiness] (43). The author summarizes the current opinions of the Abrahamic traditions—although it is perhaps a matter of a semantic problem. "Tu solus sanctus" [You alone are holy], sings the Christian liturgy. I believe that our distinction between secular and profane could be helpful in these problems.

²⁸ See the Christian theological discussions of the first centuries on *stoikeia tou kosmou*—"the elements of the world"—of Gal 4:3; Col 2:8 and 20. See Delling (1971) for an introduction to the problem. Some interpret "the elements of this world" as "the spirits that govern the universe," and others as the administrating angels of the Law.

²⁹ Talmon (1977), in his detailed analysis of the meaning of the biblical word *har* (mountain), typically states, "Biblical thinkers do not consider the mythical representation of space as something definitively holy" (470). But he must concede that "holiness occurs in a space only through its link with the God of Israel" (*ibid.*) and he must recognize that the Bible is full of such cosmic hierophanies. Also Jerusalem (from the Canaanite *ursalimmu*) is holy before the Jews, and the name itself oozes with the name of the Mesopotamian God Salim or Mulmanu (480). I give this example to show that also in one of the most historical traditions the cosmic element has not disappeared.

³⁰ "The numinous, a fearful and fascinating mystery." See Otto's classic study (1963); also Eliade (1965); Cailliois (1950); etc.

³¹ See Sir 1:11–20 for a subsequent formulation of this idea in the Jewish tradition.

less touched by the divine aura, but to sacralize these objects can lead to idolatry and ultimately to profanation.

Man emerges sovereign and alone, between God and the World, as King of Creation and servant of the Lord. There is an undeniable greatness in this conception. It represents the withdrawal of the divine from the cosmic to safeguard human dignity and to prevent the human person from being treated simply as a thing among other things. Thus God becomes the guarantor of the greatness of Man, who was created in His image and likeness.³² Dualism implies the recognition of two ways of being in the world.³³ The sacred will be called religious and the profane (*pro-fanum*) nonreligious. Modern Western history could be summarized in this dichotomy—which is often applied to the individual himself. From this perspective, there is little sense in speaking of sacred secularity. That would be equivalent to confusing the two realms that Western modernity so painfully separates. But we are ever more aware of the schizophrenia underlying this attitude.

A historic example of our times is offered by so-called liberation theology and its clash with the dominant theology, be it Orthodox, Catholic, or Protestant.³⁴ The official reaction of the Roman Church was tough (although less so later): Catholics and above all "the religious" should concern themselves with worship—that is, with the sacred separated from the profane; they should concern themselves with "saving souls" and not deal with politics, they should preach on how to reach the other world and not worry about this world.³⁵ The profane has nothing to do with the sacred, and secularity is identified as profane secularization. Sacred secularity is denied. The dualism is total.

The A-Dualistic Conception

There exists another conception of the sacred: the *Advaita* or a-dualistic vision. This conception consistently states that there is nothing separate from the sacred; everything has a sacred dimension. There is nothing absolutely "nonsacred," but at the same time on earth there is nothing totally sacred. The sacred character of things can be more or less pronounced, and it can also be eliminated or deformed, as it is only a dimension of reality.³⁶ The sacred is not a separate ontological reality, "localized" somewhere, in a transcendent Divinity in which other beings participate in a different way. Here the sacred is instead an aspect of all things for the very fact that things are real. The manifestations of the sacred, of which religious historians speak, depend on the perspicacity, purity, and other faculties of the person or the culture that uncovers—that is, reveals—this character of things that is not always manifest. The "revelation" is precisely the "revelation of the sacred." But, as the word itself indicates, it does not confer reality. It simply raises the veil on (*reveals*) what is already there.³⁷ Nothing is sacred of itself, precisely because nothing exists of itself, in

³² Gen 1:26.

³³ "Sacred and profane are two ways of being in the world, two existential situations assumed by Man in the course of history" (Eliade [1965], 14).

³⁴ I consider "liberation theology" also a liberation of theology from its medieval parameters—with some notable exceptions. The bibliography is immense. See for information: Boff (1983); Gibellini (1979); Gutiérrez (1973a, 1993); Wilfred (2000).

³⁵ The holy archbishop of Recife, Dom Hélder Câmara, told of how when he helped the poor they called him a "saint," but when he asked why there are poor people they accused him of being a "communist."

³⁶ See J. Ries (1978).

³⁷ For mystical temperaments, the revelation could be interpreted as covering with a veil of forms and concepts the ineffable and invisible Nothingness of reality.

itself. Everything is interconnected and interrelated.³⁸ And this same connection implies the sacred dimension. The sacred, as real, does not belong to the order of subjectivity (that would be superstition), nor to that of objectivity (that would be magic). Reality is not purely subjective (it is more than an idea) nor merely objective (we are also part of it). The experience of the sacred goes beyond lethal dichotomies and spiritual schizophrenia; it permits the total fulfillment of the human being without alienating him from the world. It responds to the insatiable aspiration of Man toward unity and the infinite, without throwing him into chaotic, monistic confusion.

It is clear that this conception implies a different cosmology from the dominant one, and it lies uneasily within a rigid monotheism. Its most natural framework is the cosmotheandric vision of reality, in which the sacred is not everything, but it permeates all. It should be said in passing that also the demoniac forms part of sacrality.

Description

The historical process that has led the modern world steadily to accept the vision of secularity is characterized by the continuous "strategic withdrawal" of the religious realm from the profane spheres of human life. Once, it seemed that religions dominated and permeated everything. Until recently, so-called biblical theology wanted it to be believed that the world had literally been created in six days, that each new species required special divine intervention, that God had only spoken in a book, that science had the duty to state a certain thing or defend another, and that reason should bow before a higher authority, precisely because the sacred required it. The reactions are comprehensible. Gradually even "religion" withdrew from the ethical areas that it once permeated. The process has been carefully studied.³⁹ The recurrence of dictatorships and theocracies is also well documented. A-dualistic sacred secularity disputes the model of the universe divided into two levels or compartments and therefore does not defend a determined religious sphere, separate from all other human activities and disciplines. It challenges all the dichotomies between the natural and the eternal, the sacred and the secular, without confusing these dimensions of the real in a single general monolithic unit: the "supernatural" is not a superstructure of the human; the divine is not extraneous to the human; the eternal is not a kind of perpetual future, the sacred is not in dialectic opposition to the secular, and so on. These two categories of concepts simply express two dimensions of the same reality, so that the real being of Man does not reside elsewhere (in a subsequent heaven or in a transcendent God) and it is not empirically manifest (in a physical space or a moment in history).

³⁸ Marcus Aurelius, *Meditationes* VI.38: "Think often of the bond that unites all things in the universe, and their dependence upon one another. All are, as it were, interwoven and in consequence linked in mutual affection; because their orderly succession is brought about by the operation of the currents of tension, and the unity of all substance" (trans. Maxwell Staniforth, Penguin Books, 1964).

³⁹ See among others, the penetrating analyses of D. Martin (1978); Todrank (1969), esp. 15–33, for a sketch of Christian problems; Gilkey (1979), 3–34, for the impact of scientific thought on traditional theology, and 101–36, for an attempt at synthesis; and Richard (1967). When biogenetics was limited to vegetable foodstuffs nobody seemed to realize the violence being done to nature. With the same techniques applied to animals and the consequent cloning, the "king of nature" felt proud. When they begin to be applied to Man there is some perplexity. It is naïve to want to curb this movement with moral or political laws. The problem is more fundamental and it cannot be solved without a new *kosmology* arising from the cosmotheandric vision of reality. By cosmology I mean the application of the scientific *logos* to the cosmos that is revealed by reason. By *kosmology* I mean the vision of the universe that is attained when the *kosmos* presents itself as much to the *logos* as to the spirit. See also Eastham (2003).

Sacred secularity has at times been called "holy secularity."⁴⁰ Strictly speaking, the two terms should not be confused: the term "holy" (*das Heilige*) derives from an Indo-European root meaning totality, health, physical and psychical integrity, salvation.⁴¹ The sacred, *sacer*, means "consecrated to the divine" and at the same time "which provokes horror."⁴² In the course of the history of mankind, the sacred and the holy have been lived in their polarity and ambivalence. A simple glance at history confirms that religion can inspire the most sublime or the lowest acts of human beings and that it has been responsible for the most heroic, but also the most terrible feats of the spirit of Man.

Joining these two words ("sacred secularity"), we are trying to express a great challenge for our time: the disappearance of the abyss between the human and the divine that appeared in the historical period of the human race: "Do not try to become Zeus," Pindar already says in the fifth century BCE.⁴³ "Immortal Gods and men that walk on the ground are not the same breed," states the *Iliad*.⁴⁴ "Do not try to understand things that are too difficult for you," says the Bible.⁴⁵ Despite this, the yearning to abandon the human shore to reach God—to be deified and attain the beatific vision—has constituted the constant aspiration of human beings, made "in the image and likeness" of the Creator⁴⁶ and desirous to become God before the due time.⁴⁷ An angel with a fiery sword jealously defends the threshold between the sacred and the profane.⁴⁸ God abandoned human beings to their struggle.⁴⁹

But the curtain of the Temple was torn in two;⁵⁰ the Incarnation and the Resurrection are two equally powerful human symbols of the surmounting of this dichotomy. Exile and eradication are no longer tolerable. Separation leads to the atomic holocaust. In the same way, confusion leads to the abuse of mortals by the Gods. It is not enough that some divine beings come down to mortals or that some mortals succeed in reaching the highest regions where celestial beings live. They may be shamans, *avatara*, performers of miracles, prophets, saints, but the "officers of God" have failed as mediators.⁵¹ The polarity exists and must exist.

But this polarity has given rise to an unbearable tension and in many cases has degenerated into complete separation. An abyss is then created that apparently nobody can fill. If separation is hell for earth, it is also punishment for heaven.⁵² There cannot be happiness in one place if there is affliction in the other.⁵³ Bridges and bridge-builders (pontiffs) are not

⁴⁰ See Otto (1963) and Eliade (1965).

⁴¹ See Benveniste (1969), 179–207.

⁴² See Otto (1963) *passim*, especially his analysis of the repellent, dreadful, and mysterious nature of the numinous.

⁴³ *Odae Ist.* V.14.

⁴⁴ *Iliad* 441–42.

⁴⁵ Sir 3:22.

⁴⁶ Gen 1:27.

⁴⁷ Gen 3:5.

⁴⁸ Gen 3:24.

⁴⁹ Eccl 3:11; according to the Vulgate: "et mundum tradidit disputationi eorum," although the Hebrew original is different.

⁵⁰ Mt 27:51; Mk 15:38; Lk 23:45.

⁵¹ See Drewermann (1995).

⁵² We remember the phrase of St. Thomas, consistent with all his metaphysics: "Sinners as sinners, are not." See in this regard *Sum. Theol.* I-II, q.18, a.1. Hell is the place of sinners, but it is considered an abortion: sinners are not born to Life.

⁵³ See Lk 15:7: there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. See also the famous observations of Origen on the dubious existence of hell. Maybe there could not be true happiness in

enough. The two universes must unite, enter into relations albeit without merging. Human beings can no longer live alone without Gods, earth without heaven. "On earth as it is in heaven."⁵⁴ If the sacred and the profane are dialectically opposed, the secular is the Promised Land where the two meet. *Brahmaloka* is neither *devaloka* nor *manuṣyaloka*—the world of the sacred is neither the "kingdom of the gods" nor that "of men." *Samsāra* is *nirvāṇa* precisely because *nirvāṇa* is *samsāra*;⁵⁵ the secular issues of mortals have an immortal dignity; what *has been*, for this very fact *is*, and thus always *will have been*.

The sphere of religion continues to be the sacred, but the sacred is no longer limited to the hereafter, the transcendent, the ultraworldly, the God who is Other (*alius*). The sacred, crossing the abyss, is *also* in the realm of the temporal, the material, the political, the human. Religion ceases to be the monopoly of the caste of preachers, the Brahmins of every kind; it ceases to be tied to certain specialized organizations. Religion permeates everything as a dimension of life without reducing everything to that.⁵⁶ Elsewhere we have distinguished three moments within religion: *religiosity* (human dimension), *religiology* (doctrinal aspect), and *religionism* (sociological aspect). Clearly, here we are discussing religiosity.

Sacred secularity renders superfluous the cosmological conception of a universe as a building on two floors, without this meaning that a new tower of Babel is proposed to ascend into heaven,⁵⁷ nor an eschatological messianism in which heaven descends to set up paradise on earth. The a-dualistic conscience distinguishes but does not separate.

Immanent Transcendence

The genuine secular spirit does not deny transcendence. Rather it reveals its immanent *locus*: transcendence resides in the very heart of things; that is to say, it is such only as seen by immanence. Transcendence cannot even be attained by thought, otherwise it would be a mere contradiction because thought itself would make it descend into the field of our consciousness. We find ourselves once again before the polarity of the real. There is not one without the other, and we cannot think of one without the other. Only this relational nature allows us to think of one and the other without confusing them. Immanence, if anything, is more difficult to contemplate than transcendence. The latter permits a more easily understandable spatial metaphor than that of immanence. Transcendence is beyond, out of reach. We are aware of an ignorance, an unknown, a limit that prevents us from going beyond. Immanence on the other hand is not negative transcendence. If transcendence is what is "above" us, immanence is not what is "below"; that would be negative transcendence. The experience of immanence is of something that *is* in us, or better, it is the very foundation that not only supports our empirical being but makes it *be*. Things are "more" than they seem to be, "more" not only than what the eye sees, but also the mind. Each thing, even what passes most quickly, has a dimension of transcendence that is immanent in the thing itself; as a result it does not need to come out of itself to find its realization.⁵⁸ But this statement would

heaven as there is a hell from where the cries of the suffering of the damned would reach the ears of the fortunate.

⁵⁴ Mt 6:10.

⁵⁵ See Nāgārjuna, *Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā* XXV.19.

⁵⁶ See Panikkar (1979/7).

⁵⁷ See Gen 11:1–9 and my comment in Panikkar (1990/XXIX).

⁵⁸ Without quoting the famous phrase of St. Augustine: "interior intimo meo" [more intimate to me than myself] (*Confessions* III.6.11), a central idea of *Upaniṣad*: "Existence [*svayambhū*] itself has

be false if we were to interpret this "itself" simply as a closed, isolated singularity, which has only extrinsic relations with other entities.⁵⁹ The real *itself* of anything is its *ātman*. But this *itself* is neither indiscriminate and common, nor transcendent and individualistic. Immanence is truly the only, peculiar individualizing way in which transcendence is immanent in the thing. With dialectic thought, some of these statements appear not paradoxical but contradictory. *Advaita* thought is needed to grasp that immanence/transcendence are not two concepts, but a relational polarity that does not permit isolation of one pole from the other. Only in the experience that makes me discover that there is in me something more than a "myself" can there originate the intuition that this mystery transcends me. But, I repeat, it is not a question of discovering that my *ego* lies between a "something above" and a "something below" me (negative transcendence), but rather to discover in my own being the immanence of the transcendent.

Sacred secularity does not sacrifice the concrete individual thing on the altar of the "other" (a greater Being, the Nation, God, or Ideology, what this thing will be in the future or what remains hidden in the core when the husk has been thrown away), nor does it suffocate it by isolating it *in itself*—in an individualistic *itself*. In other words, what a thing really is is not what distinguishes it from other things, but what identifies the thing with what really is. Repeating what has already been said: while a good part of Western philosophy interprets identity as starting from the principle of noncontradiction (a thing is all the more itself the more it is not another thing), the Oriental mind seeks identity applying the principle of identity (a thing is all the more itself the greater the identity is with itself). In the West the issue of *kath'auto* (in itself), from Parmenides to the Sartrian distinction between *en soi* and *pour soi*, has been a key element in the discussion concerning the correct perspective to observe reality. But it is enough here to mention the matter without making further considerations.⁶⁰

What we must bear in mind in all this is that spiritual maturity, after having pursued a circuitous circumnavigation, returns to the starting point discovering that in the fortunate simplicity of the smallest thing the greatest reality lies, because *samsāra* is *nirvāṇa* and vice versa,⁶¹ or that when time reaches its fullness God will be all in all.⁶² We find examples of this a-dualistic perspective in various traditions—for instance, in the tenth image of the classic Zen story of the owner of the ox; in the seventh *morada* (dwelling) of Teresa of Ávila; in the awareness of the *bodhisattva*; in the simplicity of the gospel; in the gaiety of *jīvanmukta*; and, again, in the awareness of the Buddhic nature of everything, of a Dōgen, for example, and so on. In this vision, everyday life becomes an ultimate value; human things are divine, heaven is on earth, compassion and love are supreme virtues, everyday life is perfection, and the secular is sacred.⁶³

opened outwards. Therefore one looks outside, not within. But a wise man, desiring immortality, turned his eyes inwards and saw the *ātman* inside" (*KathU*IV.1 [cf. *KathU*III.13]—and many other texts).

⁵⁹ See Panikkar (1975/1).

⁶⁰ See Eickelschulte (1971) for a brief summary of the history of the expression *kath'auto*. Freedom is "the positive concept of being in oneself," says Schelling in his work on freedom (in Eickelschulte [1971], 353).

⁶¹ See Nāgārjuna, *Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā* XXV.19.

⁶² See 1 Cor 15:28.

⁶³ See the beautiful reflection of Fingarette (1972), in which he describes the "human community as Holy Rite" in Confucius's vision.

The Lesson of the History of Religions

Omitting the philosophical foundations, from the point of view of the history of religions we could describe sacred secularity in the following way.

Traditional Man has lived in the *fanum* (the temple, the sacred) and the *profanum*. Whatever the relations between these two camps, the *homo religiosus* of the more classical religions cohabited and collaborated with the divine world, the universe of the sacred, the *numen*, and the profane world, often the habitat of the demoniac.⁶⁴ Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom, the Bible says.⁶⁵ The aspiration for freedom is the first necessary requirement, says India.⁶⁶ Man is not a solitary inhabitant of the universe. He does not live alone with things, animals, and plants; he lives in constant relation with his peers, other human beings. But there is much more than this; traditional Man lives in the constant presence of the spirit world, the *numina*. Man's universe has for millennia been populated by forces, energies, beings, Gods, saints, angels, mysterious connections, together with the society of men and the rest of living material beings.⁶⁷ Angels were still the force that moved planets according to Newton; the forces of nature were independent energies from all the multitude of intermediary beings between the supreme Divinity and humans. The life of Man is not only sociological history; it is a cosmic adventure, a history of the universe. It is not only the destiny of the tribe or of the entire human progeny that is at stake, but the destiny of all the universe that is acted out in the world theatre, in which men are actors and spectators, together with all the other inhabitants of the universe. But there is much more in the cosmotheandric vision of reality. The universe is not only the setting in which human life is played out; Man himself participates as an actor in the "world theater" and is also the coauthor of the "libretto" of the universe. His dignity and responsibility consist in this. If secularity is sacred, as I maintain, the life of Man on earth forms part of the cosmotheandric adventure of all that is real. We are not simple numbers among the inhabitants of the cosmos.

Things and facts either belong to the *fanum* or are related to it and in preparation for it—that is, they belong to the *pro-fanum*, to the vestibule that is found "on the front of the temple." Men are not solitary beings. Not even time isolates them from their ancestors or their descendants. Time past, present, and future is a compact, solid whole. We are all interconnected. The dead are still with us, and we can still influence their destiny; unborn babies already influence our lives. The *ecclesiae purgans*, *peregrinans*, and *triumphantis* are all one and together form the very Body of Christ, the *dharmakāya* does not only contain living beings in a concrete moment, but includes three times; the *karman* relates everything to everything, with the past and the future. . . .

Rationalism (not rationality), secularism (not secularity), scientism (not science), and movements of this kind, originating from an internal dynamism of human culture and from the reaction to the abuses of the tyranny of self-designated representatives of the sacred, have given rise to what we can call modernity, principally Western modernity. Its dream has been to eliminate all Man's "false" companions, considered superstitious projections of unattained wishes, unconfessed fears, atavistic vestiges, and superficial inertia of the exploiting

⁶⁴ See Castelli's numerous studies (1964; 1966; 1976), which are not only notes on aesthetics but also have an importance in their attempt to introduce contemporary Man into the meta-empirical world.

⁶⁵ See Eccl 1:11-20.

⁶⁶ See Śaṅkara, *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* i 8; 17; etc.

⁶⁷ See the Hellenic expression "the world is full of Gods," and the comments of Gilson (1941), 1-37, in a chapter on God and Greek philosophy.

status quo. The man of modernity is alone and sovereign, master of his own destiny, free, freed from the powers of nature and those above, freed from the powers of his peers who had exploited him. The ideal is a democratic society of self-sufficient individuals, each of whom is complete and as important as any other. There is no need to seek refuge in other nonhuman or superhuman worlds.

For a complex series of reasons, this view of the world is collapsing everywhere, even from within. But we cannot simply revert to a prescientific or even premodern experience. Viruses, wars, depressions, and anguish are not just caprices, signs, warnings, punishments, or prizes from the Gods. It seems that the Gods are returning, no longer in the hierophanies of the past, but as more sophisticated forces cloaked in scientific and highly rational forms.

Sacred secularity reestablishes, so to speak, the communion between contemporary Man and traditional Man. The universe expands, and the secular as secular (and not as *profanum*) is no longer a mere "human," measurable universe. Transforming the *saeculum* into a real definitive universe, secular life once again acquires a cosmic and divine sense beyond its human importance. The Gods do not enter furtively, so to speak, through the back door to explain what is (still) inexplicable; they were not asked to fill the gaps that science has not been able to satisfy. From a sociological standpoint, it could be that the sacred vision of the secular is extending evermore due to the growing sense of the bankruptcy of modern culture. But whatever the causes at this level, the sacrality of secularity is not a factor to be introduced to solve the unsolved problems of modernity. The sacred emerges from the very immanence of the *saeculum*. The Gods, the spirits—in a word, the Divine—are not an additional factor needed to reinforce our rational hypothesis to build a coherent image of the world. The sacred is a constituent part of the secular. Evidently it is not a matter of small substances or personified entities. It is not a matter of trees that speak or stones that hear. It is rather a matter of a dimension of ultimateness, and therefore of mystery, that has no further explanation, and of an unfathomable life in the very heart of every thing and every fact; it is an element of freedom inherent in every being that exists.

The Rediscovery of the Sacred

It should be evident that the sacrality of secularity does not lead us to a dualistic sense of the sacred, which would take us back to an almost magical heteronomous vision of the world. The sacred that we are delineating for secularity is of the second type described.

But the sacred cannot be identified with the secular. Secularity, of which we have spoken, should not be confused with a certain type of desacralized mentality typical of technological civilization. The rediscovery of what is authentically sacred is an urgent task for contemporary Western civilization.⁶⁸

The sacred is not "a thing in itself"; the discovery of the sacred is therefore not a backward step in human awareness nor nostalgia for old hierophanies. For many, this can be a way and also a tortuous journey of the entire process: mountains, water, icons, and all the traditional images of the Divine are still sufficiently rich to reawaken the sense of the sacred. But what needs to be resacralized is Man's very life. The life of Man needs to be lived fully, as a reality

⁶⁸ See Olson and Rouner (1981) and Baum and Greeley (1973) for a variety of articles on this theme. See also the many contributions of Eliade (for example, 1965), the provocation of Dupré (1972), as well as Ries (1982), who among other things edited a series on the expression of the sacred in religions (see, for example, Ries et al. [1978 and 1983], and the *Trattato di Antropologia del Sacro* (Milan: Jaca Book, 1989–2009), in twelve volumes.

more real than the merely empirical, that is, as a sacred reality. Even before demonstrations in actions and sacred things, life needs to be experienced as sacred. In other words, one of the causes of the eclipse of the sacred is that, following the modern tendency for specialization, the sacred has been considered a specialty and relegated to a caste, the caste of priests and shamans. However, a distinction must be made between the expert (the man with a rich experience) and the specialist (who sees things from a single perspective).

Traditionally the realm of the sacred was the realm of the cult or religion when life was lived as a cult and religion as a dimension of life—and not as a specialty. This same realm today appears secular. The task of religion is to approach the secular as a true route to human fulfillment, as a path of salvation, to use an old expression.

When we say "rediscovery" and not "return" of the sacred, we do not refer to the many movements that once again make us relive the traditional experiences of the sacred. It is unquestionable that we are witnessing a certain revival of sacrality, as the so-called new religions demonstrate. Man cannot stifle the third dimension of reality, but we are speaking of a "rediscovery" of the sacred in another sphere, that is, in the one considered profane. It is this discovery that leads to the mutation of our time: the sacred in secularity, bearer of the three dimensions of reality.

We have preferred to say "rediscovery" and not "discovery," because many of our predecessors had already discovered it, as well as mystics, artists, and many others. Moreover, in the depths of his psyche, Man has always known it and now he is just becoming more aware of it. Thus there emerges a primordial religiosity that puts traditional religions in a difficult and delicate position.

THE CHALLENGE OF SECULARITY FOR TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS

Sacred secularity is not a *doctrine* that replaces religions: it is not a new *dharma* for our times. This secularity represents a relatively new *attitude* within the same religious traditions. Religions can integrate the secular vision without losing their own identity nor the great wealth of their respective cultures. It would be an error to think that now we can do without myths, beliefs, temples, scriptures, rites, and religious iconography of one kind or another. The dream of Auguste Comte and of some others does not appear as true—nor desirable. The discovery of the sacred dimensions of the secular does not mean that religions should be ousted by the secular: it means rather that religions can be revitalized by new ideas and purified of concepts and obsolete practices. It is difficult to predict how this renewal will happen, because the contemporary religious contexts present a great variety of situations, depending on the cultures and countries. However, we can attempt to underline some specific aspects of this integration and the current challenges.

It is not necessary to underline the evident fact of secularization, and also deconsecration, of society, nor is it necessary to underline the end of a certain type of religion in the modern world. All opinions have been expressed, from criticism to lament to exultation, but on one point almost all agree: traditional religions are in decline. Even as emblematic a figure in the history of Christianity in recent decades as Pope John Paul II, when he speaks of "a new evangelization" for Europe, recognizes that the old or first "evangelization" has not been successful or has no value in modern times. Religions will have to change or counterattack if they want to survive, but if they counterattack they will only have an ephemeral victory and will lose the "battle," because the enemy is within. What I am suggesting is that secularity does not bring with it either the disappearance of religion or a new integralism; instead it brings a positive and radical transformation of religion itself and therefore of the self-understanding of human traditions.¹

Man is a religious being: religiosity is one of his constituent traits. But this religious character expresses itself in various new ways. We are witnessing a crucial moment in the very comprehension of what religious character is.² In other words, religion is undergoing a change. How this modifies religious beliefs and practices should be the subject of an intercultural study that we cannot develop here. Let's just look at some points.

¹ See R. Panikkar, "Have 'Religions' the Monopoly on Religion?," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 11, no. 3 (1974): 515–17.

² See R. Panikkar, "Forme e crisi della spiritualità contemporanea," *Studi Cattolici* 6, no. 33 (1962/4): 5–19 (also in *Concordia e armonia* [Milan: Mondadori, 2010/LXV]). Constitutes the first part of Section 3, Chapter 1 of this volume.

The Sacredness of the Secular and the Secularity of the Sacred

Contemporary sacred secularity prefers to enhance the sacred, divine, or ultimate aspect of the secular, rather than underline the secular aspect of the divine, as has been done traditionally. To give an example, according to a traditional doctrine of some schools, Vedantic and others, this world is the Body of God. Now, however, the accent is not so much on the affirmation that the Body of God is this world as much as the fact that *this* world is also divine. The center of gravity has changed. The sufferings of the Mystic Body of Christ do not stand out so much as the sufferings of Jesus, so much as the suffering of the poor. These sufferings belong to divinity, that is, to the ultimate order, and thus are less tolerable, because they are endowed with an ultimate character.³ Sacred secularity accentuates as much the fact that God becomes man as the fact that man is considered a divine being, not so much by descent or ascent, but by the fact that between them there is a constituent relationship. Said more philosophically, the accent is placed not so much on divine transcendence as on its immanence, not so much on divine transcendence as on human transcendence. The center is man, but this man is something more (not less) than his psychosomatic nature. What man does—his action and his creation—is serious and important; it touches the ultimate sphere of reality. It is transcendent.

In a traditional framework, if a human being did not achieve his personal human fulfillment, that meant that his earthly pilgrimage had been a failure, but he could still reach heaven, enjoy the complete vision of God or have another chance in a future reincarnation or in purgatory, etc. In a word, all was not lost. But for a secular mentality, not to achieve human fulfillment on earth is equivalent to what the majority of traditions call hell, understood not so much as eternal suffering but as death, dissolution, a lack of achievement in Life: the state of a particular human being who will never reach that degree of humanity, divinity, or fulfillment to which he was destined. Life can continue, my children may be better off, my "other, more elevated being" may go toward other spheres, my "soul" may be saved, but I, my person, this concrete being, subject to the here and now, is lost. We previously referred to the meaning of tragedy. Heaven, the other life, the transmigration of the individual soul are, in the best of cases, palliatives, and in the worst, propitiatory victims. Human destiny acquires an ultimate character in its very worldly level. The kingdom of God is certainly to be found among us, in the *interlude*: it blossoms in the temporeal instant—not in the nontemporal *in* nor in the merely historical *between*.⁴ Here, secularity becomes traditional, when it believes that very few ever reach this height of salvation.⁵

Let us repeat for greater clarity. The secular can be sacred when it is seen and lived in all its profundity and cosmotheandric nature, but detached from its roots, it can become profane. The sacred can, in turn, be found in the secular, but it does not identify with it. Physical integrity, to give an example, belongs to the sacredness of the human body, but it is better to enter the kingdom of heaven crippled or with only one eye than to be excluded. As I stated more than forty years ago in a polemical tone, "Christianity is not humanism."⁶ In a word: the secular in its (cosmotheandrical) integrity is sacred, but the sacred can manifest itself independently of the secular structures of reality.

³ See G. Gutiérrez, *Teología de la liberación*; Gutiérrez, "Faith as Freedom: Solidarity with the Alienated and Confidence in the Future," *Horizons* 2, no. 1 (1975): 25–60; Gutiérrez, *En busca de los pobres de Jesucristo*, as meaningful examples.

⁴ See Lk 17:21. The *ἐντός* of the evangelical passage may be translated as "within, between, among us."

⁵ See, for example, *BG* VII.3; *Dhammapāda* VI.10 (85); Mt 22:14; etc.

⁶ See R. Panikkar, *Humanismo y Cruz*.

It is now right to discuss a matter that we have referred to only indirectly: evil.

The *mysterium iniquitatis* is first and foremost a mystery, and therefore unintelligible. Second, we should add that the sacred is not necessarily a positive value, that is to say, good. Evil, like good, can pervade every sphere of reality. Secularity, precisely for its sacred character, is more vulnerable to the incursions of evil. That is why we have avoided the expression of holy secularity, as it could sometimes be interpreted.

Evil is real and pervades every sphere of reality. Secularity, as much as religion, can contain bad seeds—of imbalance and disharmony. Sacred secularity can contribute to a positive transformation of religions, but it is not a panacea.

The Cosmic Impact of the Political-Historical Present

Regarding the changes that have taken place in our time, one could say that the splitting of the atom has brought with it the end of humanity's historical period. Modern man has the possibility of eliminating all human and animal life on earth. This single fact transforms the *historical* feats of man into a *cosmic* drama. In other words, history breaks through human boundaries and becomes (once again) the adventure of the cosmos and not only the destiny of men. Human rivalries no longer have a merely historical significance; they become cosmic facts. A war no longer involves the civil population, but all the earth.⁷ Not only is the death of a nation or an empire at stake, but the destiny of the planet.⁸

This is the difficult situation that technology has brought about. The defenders and the detractors of technology both focus their arguments on the good and the evil that technology brings to mankind. It is up to the secular conscience to realize that the destiny of temporary structures is not something alien to the ultimate definitive destiny of man. There is a fundamental difference between the natural end of the world (or the worlds), between astronomical catastrophes or successive *kalpa* (typical of many Asiatic cosmologies), and the self-destruction of the human race or the artificial annihilation of the planet.⁹ Never before now has there arisen in the human conscience the idea of a collective suicide and, at the same time, that of a terricide. The human family, the Mystic Body of Christ, the *dharma**kāya*, now finds itself before a real and true temptation of suicide. We can now begin to glimpse the tragic character of technocratic civilization. The human race threatens itself with self-extinction and with the extinction of every form of superior life. In the current human situation we cannot isolate the guilty. We are all implicated. The tendency toward the death of human civilization becomes evident. Freud had glimpsed something important in present civilization when he spoke of its "death instinct." A two-dimensional life (lacking therefore a third dimension) is not worth living. And secular conscience makes us aware of the fact that this situation is not comparable to the eschatological preoccupations of traditional religions.¹⁰ Perhaps the sacred secular

⁷ See the very valid but too quickly forgotten reflections in K. Jaspers's study *Die Atombombe und die Zukunft des Menschen* (Munich: R. Pieper, 1958).

⁸ It is heartrending to watch the peaceful demonstrations of many antinuclear movements—which seek to protect us from a crime against humanity and the entire cosmos—in which protesters can even be imprisoned just for breaking some minor antitrespassing law.

⁹ It is surprising that while the West lives in fear of a possible "nuclear winter," the traditional populations of India refuse to be unnerved by such a threat. They live in another cosmovision.

¹⁰ See G. D. Kaufman, "Nuclear Eschatology and the Study of Religion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 51, no. 1 (1983): 3–14.

conception, which does not believe either in "second" chances or in an "other" world, can activate latent forces of salvation in the human race.

We can define religion as an *ultimate way*. Giving this statement a formal content, we can say *way of salvation*, or *way of human fulfillment*. Here, salvation or fulfillment means liberation, heaven, glory, justice, and any other homomorphic equivalent of the various human traditions. We could also have said *way of peace*.

The impact of secularity again moves the accent. Religions are *ways*, or maybe better, planned ways, for *human completeness*. This continues to be the case, but the emphasis is on the *completeness of the human*. Not so much to "save man" by redeeming him from his human condition, as to save the human condition itself: this is the new emphasis of secular spirituality. The completeness of the *humanum* is a *task of religion*, although, evidently, the interpretation of this *humanum* and its completeness varies from one religion to another.

In other words, sacred secularity does not consider the present human condition as provisional, transient, and therefore not particularly important. The temporary destiny of man is a tempternal adventure in which human destiny is at stake; the *saeculum*, however, is not the whole reality, but only one aspect, essential but not unique, of the same reality. We have already spoken of the radical trinity or the cosmotheandric vision.

As I have often stated, the most widespread epidemic in the modern world is superficiality. In a traditional conception of life, man knew that in his temporal existence his eternal destiny was at stake. It is comprehensible that modern man has received with pleasure, as overcoming the dilemma of salvation or damnation, the Oriental theory of reincarnation or transmigration (deforming, however, the sense). Sacred secularity leads us to discover once again the greatness of human life, seeing that in our earthly existence we also gamble with the destiny of the universe. Human life is unique and has a definitive importance.¹¹ Paradoxically, sacred secularity gives us back this awareness of the uniqueness and of the value of our personal life: we are builders of a new heaven and a new earth, not fleeting passengers destined to die or disincarnate souls on our way to another world.

The Loss of Cosmological Orientation

To express it another way, the great problem of religions is always the problem of the sacred. But the sacred no longer resides only in the traditional sphere of the divine or in the kingdom of nature, but also in the man-made universe. Until a short time ago, God and nature were the great challenges. When man confronts the fundamental questions, he must fight with God; he must placate the Gods, beg them, obey divine rules, and love the Supreme Being. This was the classic domain of "religion." At a later time, in a kairological change (because it does not follow a "chronological" order), finding himself confronting the fundamental questions man felt the necessity to know nature, discover the rules, know the behavior and the laws to use them to his own advantage. This is the classic domain of "science."¹² Since then, science and religion have had a strained relationship. To avoid writing an entire treatise, we quote a phrase of Galileo Galilei: "Religion tells us how to go to heaven, but not how heaven goes." In fact, natural science deals with this. The

¹¹ When asked if there were anything worse than hell, St. Catherine of Genoa replied, "Yes, it would not exist." Life then would be the useless passion described by Sartre. Every human life is what it is because it finds itself faced with something final. Cf. the same vision in the beginning of Dante's *Inferno*.

¹² See L. Gilkey, *Religion and Scientific Future. Reflections on Myth, Science, and Theology*; I. G. Barbour, *Technology, Environment, and Human Values* (New York: Praeger, 1980).

great division between modernity and traditional religions lies precisely here. Modernity believes (ingenuously) in an anthropology that is independent of any cosmology. Everything is centered on man, who continues to speak of heaven, although this heaven cannot be found anywhere.¹³

Paradoxically, sacred secularity has discovered that Cardinal Bellarmine was not so very wrong after all.¹⁴ Modern people who do not criticize science reveal their dualistic and undigested modernity. They are modern, but not secular. Modern science begins with the acceptance of the divorce between cosmology and anthropology. Descartes wants to go to heaven, but this has nothing to do with his speculation.¹⁵ Galileo wants to know how heaven moves, but independently of how to go to heaven. Man cuts his umbilical cord with the cosmos; he converts only in history. Anthropology has replaced cosmology. The danger lies in its ideological assumptions—that is, in the belief that man, and therefore his destiny, are independent of cosmology. Man “unhooks himself” alone from the cosmos. It seems irrelevant how heaven works compared to what heaven is like and how we get there. This gives rise to a disincarnate spirituality. At the beginning heaven is a symbol; then it becomes a metaphor, and it ends by being a mental state and nothing more, because even space has become something external to man. Time is no longer the fulcrum of a man’s life and so a personal way of being, but a series of coordinates extraneous to the man’s life. All these threads form a part of the same fabric of modernity.¹⁶

The assumption that science reigns in one camp and faith in another provokes a split that attempts are made to mend, saying that science and faith do not contradict one another, without however saying who decides in the event of conflict. For this reason it is best to avoid all contact. In reality, the problem of man’s spirituality has in itself contact with the specific field of science, if nothing else for man’s questions concerning meanings, diverse and complementary with respect to the scientific ones, that anyway open horizons and require responses. But if contact is avoided, science can continue undisturbed. The other world has disappeared, and this world is already occupied. Not only is it supposed that man is the absolute king, but that he is alone in the universe. Modernity has developed an anthropology or “science of man” that is totally independent of cosmology, of “how heaven works.” The conception of *anima mundi* vanishes.¹⁷

For a traditional mentality open to modernization it will seem like a joke to hear that sacred secularity itself makes us aware of the fact that if heaven can have a meaning in the traditional sense it should not be separated from the material universe in which we live. After all, astrology and alchemy did not act at random when they attempted to develop a holistic

¹³ See S. Toulmin, *The Return to Cosmology: Postmodern Science and the Theology of Nature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), on the growing interest of contemporary science in cosmology.

¹⁴ See G. de Santillana, *The Crime of Galileo*, of which the second sentence is, “As I tried to clear up the astonishingly complex background of Galileo’s *Dialogue on the Great World Systems*, I was drawn to the drama which played a decisive part in that fateful event in modern history, the secularization of thought” (vii).

¹⁵ Ch. Adam and P. Tannery, eds., *Oeuvres de Descartes*, vol. 6, *Discours de la méthode & Essais* (Paris: Vrin, 1996), 8.

¹⁶ See M. Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982), for a crushing critique of the tragedy of modernity.

¹⁷ Cf., for example, Marco Aurelio, *Meditationes* IV.40, in G. Long (trad.), *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*, in R. M. Hutchins, ed., *Great Books of the Western World*, vol. 12, *Lucretius, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952), 267. See also H. R. Schlette, *Welseele. Geschichte und Hermeneutik* (Frankfurt am Main: Knecht, 1993).

vision of the universe, which is something more than a field on which men landed. The very suspicion that the human race could have arrived on earth from another constellation reveals how much the "modern" mentality is separated from the earth itself. It is equivalent to the idea of a Cartesian soul depositing itself in a prefabricated body. Alienated from God, the Father, the modern "scientist" has ended up by distancing himself from the earth, the Mother—and has become the bastard son of this planet. It is therefore not strange that he is trying to blow it up. The "war of the galaxies" syndrome, even if it were only a cinematographic invention, is much more significant. One does not wage war in one's own house or against one's own body. The recovery of traditional knowledge could be a crucial step to transform the current crisis. It is evident on the other hand that we need a new cosmovision and we must not simply resort to obsolete cosmologies.

The Man-made Universe

Currently, prepared by modern technology (which is something more than applied "science") and stimulated by the splitting of the "indissoluble" (*atomos*), the great challenge for man is man himself. The great confrontation does not see man before God or nature, but before himself: man who fights the historical-technological-scientific forces that he himself used to create an artificial universe. Having to confront this man-made system, the individual feels much more desolate than when he confronts the divine world or the natural one. It does not seem that someone in particular is responsible for these impending disasters. The system, unlike God (or the Gods) or nature, opposes personalization: it cannot be individualized; it is anonymous; it seems that nobody has real control over it. Anonymity and depersonalization are integral parts of the technological myth. We cannot limit our preoccupation to an atomic holocaust, but we must also be aware of the direction taken by psychology, genetics, biochemistry, electronics, and so on.

Man's destiny is not left to "God's will" or to the "whims" of nature, but to the "Sphinx," to the enigma of Man. Perhaps for many, God and nature still maintain the same function of ruling the world, but for the élite of the technocratic complex governing the outside world, the function of God and nature is absolutely secondary. Hunger, for example, which has never been as widespread as in this period, is not now seen as divine punishment or a disorder of nature, but as a technical-political-economic matter.¹⁸ And this is a question of life or death. Today this is very much a religious question.

Technology creates a man-made world and obliges us to live in it. We cannot survive outside it. Without electricity and without the so-called services of modern medicine, the means of communications, transport, industry, and so on, the megalopolis could collapse. Instead of a live organism we have created an artificial organization. A live organism regenerates itself alone, recycles itself, and re-creates the lost or damaged parts in symbiosis with its environment. The technological system is a mechanical and not an "animist" system; it has no freedom or space for the conscience. We can only survive if we "work" for the system, if we keep it constantly functioning. Our human work no longer respects the natural rhythms of the earth. Work has become artificial; it has been reduced to mere mechanical maintenance. We are tied down to our *work*, that is, to the *tripalium*, the instrument of torture. Contemplation is excluded or becomes a luxury. Nothing is done without a pragmatic purpose, because it is not productive. Everything we do is aimed at perpetuating the system. For three-quarters of

¹⁸ See several examples in O. Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

humanity this "work" bears very meager fruit and compels them to live in subanimal conditions. But the others prosper.¹⁹

At present, the most urgent task of religion is to rediscover its correct role. Religion cannot leave man's fundamental problems to mere technical "solutions" or to the analysis of those particular sciences that correspond to a *pensée unique*, albeit the prevailing one.

Man's Destiny and the Object of Religion

Let us try to reformulate once again: the object of religion is not God; it is the *destiny of man*, of man not only as an individual, but also as a society, as a species, as a microcosm, as a constituent element of reality that, at the same time, reflects and contains the whole. We have said "man," and we have immediately added what we meant by this. The *anthropos* of which we speak is not only the meeting point between the divine and the cosmic, but is also this complex unit that consists of a body, a soul, and a spirit—that embraces the entire universe. Without these three elements man does not exist.

We have also said that the object of religion is *human destiny*. According to some religions, life on earth is not the final destiny of man, but even the doctrines that speak of "eternal life" and "transcendence of the *karma*" depend on the real existence of this earthly life. It may not be a great final tragedy if the planet is threatened or annihilated, but it is without doubt a universal religious preoccupation. Secular man cannot be indifferent to it.

In other words, in order to maintain a certain healthy balance between the "scientific" (objectivist) mentality and the interior world of the individual, the modern Western world has induced poets and writers to offer the public an imaginary world. But the majority of people, including writers themselves, keep the two worlds separate: the objective, *real* world, and the subjective, imaginary world. The narrator has a cathartic role; he entertains and can even save someone's life, as happened in some cases in the concentration camps. The groups that had someone among them who told stories survived the hard existence of the camps more easily than others. Stories were a healthy instrument for the imagination, which fueled the prisoners' stamina.

I would like to go a step further—or better, to take the place of narrators. The world of imagination is not an "other" world, a fantastic and clearly unreal realm. There are not two worlds, the real, objective one, and the oneiric or fantastic constructs of the imagination. Both are equally real and part of reality. Castrating reality, reducing it to one of the four states of being described in *Māndākya-upaniṣad*, is paralyzing both for the human being and for reality itself. Let us take for example *One Thousand and One Nights*. What is more real: Sheherazade, who must face death after her first night with Shahriar, the emperor of Persia, or the stories that she told to the disheartened emperor? In other words, the story is not the only reality; the "objective facts" are not the only "real facts" that may exist. The myth is as real as story; or, as I have detailed elsewhere, story is merely the myth of the man who defines himself civilized, especially in the West.

Everything leads us to try to overcome the dualism that has infested more than one culture, without falling into the trap of monism.

Sacred secularity unites two ideas considered until now mutually incompatible or at least extraneous to one another. Only the change that is developing at present can prevent man from falling into the extremities I have indicated (monism and dualism), by an *Advaita*

¹⁹ I shall not include here statistical results and other data that are today widely known and that I have published elsewhere.

vision of reality. This represents a challenge for society and acquires historic proportions. It is no longer a question of control of this world, but of its survival. The challenge is also for the individual, for every one of us. It requires not only a change of mentality but above all of heart, a change that cannot, however, be imposed, nor can it be the fruit of an exclusively rational conviction, but it needs to be the fruit of experience. This experience does not depend on our will; we can, however, keep ourselves open to the coming of the Spirit (speaking metaphorically), in as much as it is grace, gift, enlightenment . . . if you will permit these words.

We have tried to describe this vision, aware that ideas have strength when they fall on fertile ground. In the third part of this story we try to present some indications of this vision in order not to remain exclusively on a theoretical plane.

Part 2

ECONOMICS AND THE MEANING OF LIFE*

I would like to tackle this topic with an invitation to silence. Silence is a meeting place between time and eternity, and those who do not know how to live in silence spend all their life running in the wake of a temporality that, in the long run, always turns out to be disappointing. My invitation to silence implies that the word, the *logos*, is not all in Man. Without referring to other traditions, I could quote St. Irenaeus, who declares that from the silence of the Father comes forth the only word, the *Logos*, the Son; or John the Evangelist: "In the beginning was the Word." The word is *in* the beginning, but it is not *the* beginning. The beginning is silence. Our having forgotten that has generated in our culture a "logomachy,"¹ a logorrhea, which then converted into rationality and constitutes one of the most recent causes of the situation in which we find ourselves.

The experience of silence does not simply mean not speaking, nor a repression of the word when one has many things to say, but an awareness of the relativity of each word, and therefore of its imperfection: there is not a word or concept that can express all of reality. There is something ineffable, inexpressible, in reality, of which I can be aware only in silence. If we do not discover this other dimension, the only sociological alternative is defeat, if not total fiasco or descent into pessimism. It is pointless also to project hope into the future, whether one calls it heaven, reincarnation, history . . . because in the meanwhile depression can turn into indifference. We must realize the true uniqueness of the situation in which we are living. The splitting of the atom, a unique fact in history, and the overwhelming invasion of modern technology into every corner of the world prohibit us from simply thinking within old parameters. In my opinion, what is currently at stake is not politics à la petite *semaine* or a particular order, but the destiny of this humanity which for six thousand years we have called historical. We have the privilege, vis-à-vis six billion people, to be able to realize and know that, joining the intellect with the heart and action, we can contribute in some way to

* Original article: *Economia i sentit de la vida*, in G. Ancochea Soto et al., *Neoliberalisme i desenvolupament. Alternatives al neoliberalisme. Com sobreviure al desenvolupament* (Barcelona: Edicions de la Universitat Oberta de Catalunya-Pòrtic, 2001), 23–36.

¹ "Word wrestling."

overcome this passage, this mutation. It is not an epoch of change, as someone has written: it is a change of epoch.

After this premise, I can face the subject, dividing my essay into three points: a first part on development, a second on economic pluralism, and a third on "surviving development."

I would like immediately to avoid the temptation, typical of the modern *forma mentis*, to concentrate on the "how," forgetting the "what." For modernity the *how* is important: How does the machine work? How does the computer work? How does the family work? How does society work? The problems of technology are all problems of "how." I, on the other hand, do not want to concern myself exclusively with "how," in order to try to describe a little the "what." The "what" is the meaning of life, and it is more complex. Having forgotten it—or having delegated it to the saints, the mystics, the theologians, and spiritual people—has given rise to a personal and collective schizophrenia of which we are probably all more or less victims. So my task is not so much to delegitimize the dominant economic paradigm—since legality does not particularly matter to me—as to make a quick analysis of the three above-mentioned concepts.

DEVELOPMENT

I will begin straightaway with "development." We should ask ourselves why this word has had such an extraordinary success. We began to talk of "developed or underdeveloped peoples" in 1949. From that moment, the word "development" has monopolized the language. I carried out a study of the official documents of the United Nations and found that they speak of development, underdevelopment, or direct, cultural, economic, sustainable, endogenous, people-oriented, interdisciplinary, scientific, technological, social, historical development.... The word "development" is all-pervasive, and development has become an intangible myth, a reality on which "we obviously all agree." Maybe even here we are not as developed as we think, as every now and then I must invite some friends of mine from Bengal to be patient when they would like to make a crusade against these "underdeveloped" Western countries in which the people do not know how to live, to eat, to enjoy themselves... but the paradigm of development remains. Words have an intrinsic force.

I have often wondered why the idea of development has been "developed" so universally that it has transformed into the dominant ideology. I am convinced that development would not have had this success if in the West, where it took hold, there had not been Parmenides, Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, Descartes, and the thinkers of our time. The idea of development is so strongly rooted in the West because it is none other than a unilateral application of the Aristotelian intuition of power (*dynamicē on*). In Aristotle, power requires another extrinsic element: the act (*energeia*), and both constitute the finished being. Things have a potentiality that must be actualized through an act: this concept continued right up to the physics of Newton and even that of Einstein and Planck. If I take a pen in my hand and let it drop, I realize that an energy "develops" that was not there before and now is there. We say, then, that this body had a potential energy that was developed while it fell, because of gravity and many other things. It is a sort of necessity of a certain type of thought to make the appearance of a force understandable in a determined context. Without acceleration, the physical force does not "appear."

The consequences of this concept are far-reaching: it is ironic that in Western countries scientists and so-called believers are still discussing the "Big Bang" and creation, as if the creation were a reality that began with the Big Bang and developed subsequently. All evolutionism rests on the idea that the hidden potential in the lower levels of reality is evolving. The difference from the Aristotelian conception of the *dynamicē on*, of the potential being, resides in the fact that power needs an act coming from outside that actualizes it: the Divine in any form, the pure act. We who are already more "developed" think that everything can happen without this pure act, which almost seems a superfluous hypothesis. So reality develops alone because it does not need a God, a Demiurge, or any agent which actualizes it: things are explained as a development of power. Even current theologians have fallen into the trap

of thinking, against the best teachings of medieval theology, that the creation occurred in the past, before, or with the Big Bang, forgetting what the good Scholastics called *creatio continua*. If the *creatio* is not today, now, at this moment, it is not creation. Thinking that God is an engineer—perhaps a little more clever than us, who made things in such a way that they could develop from the Big Bang to the most complex systems—in addition to being blasphemy is also naïve. Recall the famous *chiquenaude* of Descartes: God gave the initial nudge and then everything functions by itself, developing its own potential.

The idea of development is the central monocultural idea of the West. We must become aware that the idea of development is neither neutral nor universal nor universalizable, and this belief, which is in its way ingenious—that the conception of a single culture is valid for all cultures—is the essence of colonialism. Colonialism is not necessarily a bad thing. Not all colonialists were brutal, cruel *conquistadores*; they just had the conviction that God, culture, and the empire were the solution for everybody. First they said, "One God, one religion, one Church." Now they say, "One world market, one democracy, one world government," but it is the same syndrome: just the same dogs with different collars—or, if you like, the same dogfish.

The Crisis of "Development"

I do not wish to analyze further the origin of this success from a philosophical standpoint, but I prefer to linger a little on the crisis of development: development no longer works. Currently, only 8 percent of humankind has a car; but if, in ten years, 72 percent of the world population had one, we would not be able to breathe on the planet. On the other hand, if I am democratic-minded, I want what is good for me to be good also for others. So, the idea of development is in crisis because it cannot be extended in space or time.

But development is in crisis for another, deeper reason. Not only because, since 1945 to nowadays, twenty-five hundred people have been dying every day in wars, but above all because development has slipped out of our control. Development is so "developed," the cancer has produced such numerous metastases, the homeostasis is so broken, that we, who thought—with Bacon—that knowledge is control, knowledge is power, begin to realize that we cannot control anything at all. Development functions by itself, beyond the control of individuals and society. It would be truly insulting to say that all those in power are criminals and egoists. They would like to change the situation, but it slips out of their control—even that of the toughest dictator. An Indian proverb says, "If you ride a tiger, you cannot get off, otherwise the tiger will eat you." We are riding a tiger.

Silence is as important an organ as thought for opening oneself to all the richness of reality. As thought functions by composing and dividing, it needs a certain amount of linear time, not too long and not too short. But thought is not all there is. We have lost that universal human experience to realize that reality has other dimensions. It is as if we had lost the eye that allows us to see depth. The tragedy of Christianity in Africa is that it has not valued dance—that is to say, the great discovery that the ultimate nature of time is rhythm: not linearity nor circularity, always the same thing and always different, the last step being the same as the penultimate and yet each is diverse and distinct.

Here I anticipate a *theologoumenon* that I had been keeping for the end, stating that hope is not in the future but in the present—that is to say, in the invisible. I believe that in 1997 the syndrome of *we shall overcome, venceremos* no longer works and becomes demagogic. It happened once, but thousands and thousands of other times the victor was Goliath and not David. This does not mean that there cannot be a Martin Luther King Jr. or a Gandhi—although we must not forget that Gandhi's success came at the cost of two million victims.

Perhaps the human problem should be seen in a third dimension of depth in order not to fall into the temptation of the "how" (the instruments or the rules of the game with which the powerful and current culture provide us). So, intercultural relations are not a luxury for privileged minds who go to India or make cultural tours, which is another form of prostitution, but an indispensable need.

The first radical mutation should occur in the language. We need to stop using the word "development," or worse still, the description "developing," to indicate the majority of the world's countries. It would make a great difference if, instead of defining them as "developing," they could be called "awakening" or "enlightening." The words smack rather of esotericism, of New Age, but we must not forget that India alone has a larger population than the United States, Russia, and Europe put together. And on the Indian subcontinent these words would sound different. Perhaps a whole other world would open up through the very power of words, the strength of myth. We are currently victims of the terrorism of development: if you do not develop, you do not have a career, you will starve. Develop or die: an imperative as valid for individuals as for states and institutions. We all live in terror of not being able to be developed.

ECONOMIC PLURALISM

The word "pluralism" is used in so many ways, rather like the word "development," but I do not want to use it in the sense of plurality nor in the sense of tolerance. "We have to tolerate others because they are powerful. We are constrained to tolerate the Chinese. What we cannot tolerate is Iraq, but we can tolerate China"—just to give an example. Pluralism is more than tolerance; it indicates that attitude of Man (and cultures) that recognizes his (and their) contingency, that is, that no Man and no culture have access to the entire human experience, and that nobody can understand, comprehend, and embrace all the contingency. The etymology says it: *cum-tangere*, you touch a reality that is infinite, but only at one point. Awareness of the intrinsic limitation of everything is the starting point to make what, from an intellectual standpoint, is irreconcilable interact.

I recently had quite a lively discussion on multiculturalism, a label of which Quebec particularly likes to boast. Quebec considers itself a multicultural region because the Vietnamese can perform their dances, Greeks can open their restaurants, and the others can dress as they like. Cultures are not folklore, and pluralism is not tolerance of others for their level of exoticism, because they are not powerful; it is the recognition of the fundamental and essential incommensurability of the diverse forms of culture, religions, and ways of life. Awareness of this radical incompatibility prevents us from thinking, after six thousand years of historic existence, that I, the monotheist or the Scotist, the democrat or the liberal, am right and the rest of the world may live in obscurity. In the 1970s, the president of the United States Chamber of Commerce stated that humanity had lived in the Stone Age until American democracy with the free market had begun to respect the individuality of each human being. To think that the others have for centuries and centuries been wrong, or stupid, or even evil, and that only I in the whole world and in all time am in the right, is a little suspect, not to say anything stronger.

Pluralism is not even an easy consolation, provided by eschatology, of the final reconciliation, so that in the end everything will fall back into place. It is not pluralistic behavior to say that now we are fragmented into many visions of the world, but the truth is one. Truth is neither one, nor two, nor many. Truth is pluralistic—which does not mean plural. It simply means the recognition and the awareness of the reciprocal irreducibility of systems, forms of life, cultures. Truth itself is a relation.

We could draw a very simple example from the history of geometry. Probably around the ninth or eighth century BCE, first the Babylonians, then the Indians, and the Greeks a little later discovered that there was incompatibility between the hypotenuse and the cathetus, and that there was incommensurability between the radius and the circumference. They called them "absurd numbers" at first, then "irrational numbers." The circumference cannot be measured by the radius, and yet without the radius there is no circumference, and vice versa;

they live together, they are constitutive elements of each other, but they do not understand each other. And this raises the question: can we only accept what we understand? My reply is "no." Not only can we not do so, but not even an omniscient God could.

An omniscient God knows all that is knowable, but how can we be sure that Reality, or Being, must be knowable? Perhaps, in spite of Parmenides and Hegel, there is an opaque part of reality that is not knowable. Neither the individual mind nor the collective mind can exhaust reality. Awareness is superior to intelligibility; in other words, I am aware of something I do not understand. English speakers use the words *awareness* and *consciousness* to indicate that awareness and intelligence are not the same. Pluralism is therefore this recognition that none of us from his point of view, not even the omniscient God, can embrace all that is real.

An Economy of Solidarity

Every culture as a culture (not to be confused with folklore) has an economic system. I could speak here of the *grhaṣṭhaśāstra* of classical Indic civilization, which is an economy of family life, without currency, with authority and power, without that competitiveness that has now become necessary due to the terrorism I referred to above, but in solidarity. I will give an example to explain this more quickly. The cousin of a student of mine, back in the 1970s, like all good revolutionaries went to Africa to teach children. As he was already sufficiently conditioned by his professors, he did not want to be a colonialist, teaching those people all our sciences and our knowledge. The only truly neutral thing was gymnastics. This way he did not feel colonialist, everyone was very happy, and he was too. One day, with a group of nine or ten children, he arrived with a box of chocolates and explained to the children that on the count of three they had to run to reach the tree that was 150 meters away. He counted: one, two, three... and all the children held hands and ran together. This is solidarity, this is normal life, this is the human heart, this is the nature of being human, when it has not fallen into the isolation of individualism that obliges us to be selfish to survive.

Americans distort the pronunciation of the word "justice" into "just us" to underline that in economics there exists no other motivation but profit for "just U.S." Yet most human actions are not directed toward profit but motivated by something else: we could call it love, instinct, or spontaneity; it is in any case a much more powerful force than rationality.

I am therefore not convinced by the theory of a human economy guided solely by profit, because direct contact with certain exponents of the world of economics leads me to say that, in the current economy, what counts much more is pride and ambition for power rather than the rule of profit. Indeed, I suspect that behind this exclusively negative vision of Man there is a subterranean influence of a certain Christian conception of the original sin, as if Christians had concentrated, in the reading of this myth, only on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and had forgotten about the tree of life.¹ Man is not only bad, and the tree of life reminds us that life is also a game, joy, and grace. In Hinduism, for example, the figure of Indra reminds the believer that one must go beyond good and evil and attain a new innocence. We still need to overcome these last six thousand years marked by a culture of war, a negative asceticism, and a theology of punishment, springing from a misinterpretation of Christian redemption. God wants mercy and not sacrifice.²

To return to the territory of economics, we must affirm decisively that an economy divorced from Man, seen only as an application of the law of the strongest, where the bigger fish eats

¹ Gen 2:9.

² See Hos 6:6; Mt 9:13; etc.

the smaller one, where maximum profit is always sought, is false. It is neither *nomos* (law), nor *oikos* (home), it is not *oiko-nomy* (eco-nomics), the law that governs human society. We need the intellectual courage to contest the latest premises of the current form of economics: it is not only a matter of goods that must be produced at the lowest possible cost and that must travel from one end of the world to the other in the shortest possible time, but it is a matter of human beings who need to eat, live, and feel well. A humane economy must be about people and their needs, not about things (goods) and their laws.

Each culture generates an economic system. I lived for six months with the Naga, in the northeast of India, where food is sacred: it is not bought or sold, and it is not traded. And yet we are not in a communist regime. It is true that it is a population of six hundred thousand inhabitants, but the economic organization is exceptionally sophisticated. During my stay, I discovered that in the whole region there are only two hospitals, and the doctors and nurses of these two structures told me that there are no cases of mental illness, no forms of depression. People die for other reasons, but they are not possessed of that subtle anxiety that penetrates the populations in the West. In short, a culture that starts from anthropological origins diverse from ours generates an economy of a completely different kind to the capitalist one, which emerged in Europe just three centuries ago, from an individualistic anthropology.

Cross-Fertilization between Cultures

We must distinguish between monoculturalism, pluriculturalism, and interculturality. I have already criticized monoculturalism, so I will not linger further on it. Pluriculturalism does not exist, for the simple fact that, when I open my mouth, I speak in one language. We cannot be multicultural, but we must be—and this is the imperative of our times—intercultural. Cultures must not close themselves or only maintain relations of outward appearance or power. They must leave space for knowledge and cross-fertilization; but knowledge is only possible when there is love, and love is only released when we touch each other.

How, then, are we not to be trapped in a solipsism? For me, the first dilemma would be between solipsism and information technology, to put it briefly. In its universalizing intent, information technology wants to persuade us that the sum of all of "us" is "us." It is the *protón pseudon*³ of democracy, as if the whole were the same as the sum of its parts (rational thinking begins here). The whole is not the same as the sum of its parts, but as we have lost direct contact with the Whole, we have no alternative but integral calculus, the computer, or the total votes. It is not through addition that we attain the whole. Therefore the relationship between people, also economically, does not need the Internet, nor a single market, nor global democracy, nor a world government, where analysis is the only system.

Let us take two examples from nature: the rainbow and semipermeable membranes, which permit movement of a liquid in one direction but not in the other. In the rainbow it is difficult to distinguish where one color ends and another begins: they are all in relation with one another. In the same way, there is a relationship with one's neighbor, with the other, and the other is the one I know, not the one who lives in Patagonia. I have mentioned a certain prostitution in cultural tourism (nowadays we eat up more kilometers than proteins), which makes us think that the person living in Patagonia or the person I see on television is my neighbor. In reality, he is not; my neighbor is the person I know, I speak to, I touch, I have meetings and disagreements with. We have lost the human dimension, we are all already mechanized: we think like a computer, we are convinced that putting things on television is

³ The "original sin."

the equivalent of knowing reality. We have lost a sense of the mystical, the *buddhakāya*, the Mystical Body of Christ, *karman*, which is the awareness of universal solidarity, without the need for mind control and knowing all the details. The rainbow can be a symbol for both social and economic relations. The problem of economic pluralism is that of finding bridges of interculturality, on the model of the rainbow, or of any fruit that has a semipermeable membrane that receives and preserves.

3

HOW TO SURVIVE DEVELOPMENT

Some conditions seem to be necessary in order to survive.

The first is the passage from *interdependence*, which is continually spoken of, to *inter-independence*. The etymology of the word is significant: "pendent," the inferior who hangs on the lips of the superior: I am *de-pendent* on one stronger than me. I am *in-dependent*, on the other hand, when I have cut all relations and I can survive all the same. Interdependence occurs when one is the condition for the development of the other. Today we are interdependent because the Third World is the condition for the development of the First.

Inter-in-dependence is completely different: it is not heteronomy, it is not autonomy (everyone for himself); it is the relationship between equals, the relation of freedom and grace, which does not serve to make profits, otherwise we would already be conditioned, but to play and to enjoy ourselves. When in Hindu theology it is said that God created the world to play, it means that life is a game, sport, and beauty—which is the sense of the word "grace." At bottom, it speaks of the meaning of life. If we still want to play with the rules of others, there is no solution. *Ontonomy* is needed, to put it academically—or *synergy*, as St. Paul would put it.¹

I have recently returned from an international conference, attended by artists, scientists, spiritual people, and economists, with the theme "From Competition to Compassion." Naturally, on this topic economists say many nice things, because compassion and competition lie within their focus range. I proposed changing the title to "From Competition to Cooperation," which is so only when there is inter-in-dependence, otherwise it is not cooperation. When you are the master of your action, you feel fulfilled, and despite everything, you enter into an interchange with the other. My heart works in inter-in-dependence with my frame of mind. To an extent, it is independent, as I am alive, but there is a relationship with my frame of mind, and not only through adrenaline. There is a relationship of inter-in-dependence. In order to survive, it is necessary to achieve this inter-in-dependence in various forms.

I will now pass to the second point of this third part and underline the inevitable dilemma: either radical transformation of the meaning of life, of the meaning of civilization (of all the premises I have tried to illustrate talking of Aristotle, Parmenides, etc.), or total catastrophe. Small reforms here and there are not sufficient. They only serve to prolong the agony of a system condemned to die. We must realize that what we consider great values (democracy, technocracy, a world market) are unacceptable as a starting point for peace between people. The conceptions of matter, space, time, science, and anthropology must be completely rethought. If we do not do this, the rest is like an aspirin that makes the headache go away for a short time but does not cure the illness. I think that the moment has arrived. This is why the economic problem is not only economic, but human, total. It is a problem of the human

¹ See 1 Cor 3:9.

condition. When economics achieves a ruthless objectivization, because science makes us think that it is the only way to arrive at reality, it forgets that we are talking of human beings and not just of money transactions, market laws, and growth. We should oppose this, asserting that we are speaking of something else: of Men, not of coins, of human persons, not of laws of physics or sociology—not for reasons of romanticism or for the sake of philosophy, but precisely for economic relations between people.

In Mexico, a Spanish friend of mine stopped to admire the work of a craftsman who was painting some fantastic multicolored chairs. "How much is this?" he asks the man, holding one up. "Ten pesos, *señor*," replies the man. "I want six just like this one. Here's sixty pesos." "Oh no, *señor*, that'll be seventy-five." "Why," asks my friend, "if one chair costs ten pesos should six chairs cost seventy-five pesos?" And the craftsman replies, "Who pays me for the tedium of making six chairs all the same?" We treat others like machines. We have already made our heart arid. Who pays that artist who still experiences the joy of creating? "I will give you the chair for free, if you like, but making them all the same castrates my creativity. It means turning me into a slave in the name of the sixty miserable pesos you offer me." If economics means that six chairs are a little cheaper than buying them one by one because there is more profit, this means that civilization has reached a low point. It is a victim of the demon of objectivity, which—unwittingly—makes us a part of the machine and turns human relations upside down.

But if economics is not human relations, I do not know what it is.

The Intermediate Steps

Some years ago, I wrote that there is not *one* alternative to the present system, but there are *alternatives*. Now I would like to emphasize that saying "alternatives" is not sufficient because, when we speak of alternatives, we always need the *alter* that makes us different, so we are still playing with the parameters of the Big System. So we need creativity, courage, spirituality, and the disposition to be saints to fail or to triumph. We are lacking the freedom of the truly spontaneous action of the human being, which is what gives us joy. Not only alternatives, which are anyway necessary—they are intermediate steps—but creativity, absolute novelty at a personal, human level, for every one of us.

There is no solution here. There is something more: our responsibility is at stake. So the problem is not just economic nor exclusively technical, as if it were a matter of finding a new course of action. It is a new discovery of life, it is this hope that does not reside in the future but in the invisible. It is this human relationship that breaks all molds. I interpret the so-called rebellion of the young generation as the confused intuition that all our good advice is within an order that crushes. I have the sensation that our civilization is heading for the rocks, and that each of us is trying to cling onto any flotsam. All I am doing is advising people not to cling on to anything, but to swim a little before discovering another dimension. To all those who are not aware of the impending shipwreck and who defend the present form of economics, or who claim that technology has done everything possible to improve people's lives, I would like to ask why one-third of humanity does not have drinking water, why the world spends seventy times more on a soldier than on a student, why world income has increased fivefold from 1960 to 1991 only for developed countries. This system has only had results for us, for 20 percent of humankind, and today we are facing the need for a radical change.

Here is more: the present system has disrupted the earth's rhythms. We currently use thirteen units of energy per capita, twelve of which go to the richest fifth of humankind, while the Earth can only sustain three. With acceleration we have broken not only human

rhythms but also cosmic ones. In my opinion, the fission of the atom is equivalent to a cosmic abortion. We open the vagina of the atom because we need a greater quantity of energy, and we do not ask any questions. To say, as some people do, that we can use atomic energy as we please because atomic bombardments already occur in the sun is like claiming that we can kill each other because we are mortal.

But I would like to take my thought even deeper: in my opinion, technology has at this point completed its mission. It is evident that, from the beginning of the Industrial Revolution to now, there has been a great leap forward for 20 percent of people, but we now discover that this very industrial revolution that is becoming uncontrollable is destroying the remaining 80 percent of humanity. Take this example: in ten years a machine consumes fifteen times more than a child. If we then examine the living conditions of this 20 percent, we realize that they live in work slavery. The Spanish word for *work* is *trabajo*, which derives from the Latin *tripalium*, an instrument of torture. Various languages make a distinction between "work" and "labor" to emphasize that Man is called to be a gardener of creation² and cooperator with God,³ not a slave-worker. A more thorough look reveals that there are three great industries in the North of the world: the one that moves goods, capital, and weapons; tourism; and advertising. Some figures: 50 percent of the world economy is sucked into defense spending, 60 percent of U.S. psychologists work in propaganda. We are totally indoctrinated, so that we do not realize the system we live in and cannot get out of it.

In order to truly leave the form of civilization in which we are trapped, we need great spiritual strength. A civil war was necessary to convince humankind that slavery was indefensible; it will probably take us many traumas and a great deal of suffering to realize that capitalism and the current organization of the economy are the new forms of slavery. However, we would need to eliminate it in a nonviolent manner, as if a new Prometheus took on a female form in order to steal the fire from Zeus—seducing, rather than engaging in a dialectic battle and dividing people into good and bad; seeking cooperation rather than head-on confrontation.

At bottom, nothing can be absolutized, not even the refusal of the System, but we must free ourselves of those ways of thinking that have led us into this blind alley, particularly pan-economicism, which makes us believe that economy is everything in people's lives.

Our civilization has no future; the example of India demonstrates this. For the Indian middle classes, who number 160 million people and live much better than the majority of Italians, democracy, capitalism, and technology have been a godsend, but for the other 750 million people they have brought a deterioration in their living standards. At the time of the British Empire, the economical ratio between big cities and the rest of India was 8:1; nowadays it is 47:1. We are on the wrong track; we cannot continue with the same trends. The intermediate steps are human steps, the ones *we* take—each of us, then, on the human scale: our authentic "small" steps. If it is a human problem and not just a technological one, Man is the answer. But we often lack faith, hope, and love in ourselves.

A Radical Metanoia

Not even a change of plan is sufficient. A much more profound and radical operation is needed: we must change ourselves. We may doubt if in this way we would do anything for the world, yet I am convinced that we would do a great deal more than we can imagine. What

² Gen 2:15.

³ Again, see 1 Cor 3:9.

we lack is confidence in ourselves, which pushes us to cling to the rules or the system that is valid for us. Perhaps we are hostages of a quantitative and scientific way of thinking, so that one individual among six billion people is truly insignificant, or an association in a world context will not manage to change any equilibrium. This is an absolutely false idea, which has lost the sense of the uniqueness of each of us, the awareness of the third dimension⁴ of the Real and the conviction that hope is not in the future, but in the invisible. Dreaming of a better future is naïve, as demonstrated by the history of the victors and the oppressed. From a sociological point of view, Buddha, Jesus, and Martin Luther King Jr. were failures. We need to discover the "third eye" that opens us to another dimension of reality, which allows us to feel that our life, even among all the tragedies of the world, has not been a failure.

In four and a half billion years, all forms of life will have ceased to exist on Earth. If our problem is only to *survive*, it can be done at any cost, even putting others in concentration camps and abdicating human dignity. If, on the other hand, it is a matter of *living*,⁵ then we must realize that life is not a function of time: a short life can be fuller and more meaningful than one that lasts for a long time. It is worth having lived and living, not because the future will be better (nobody knows what it will be like), but because in the present a new light is revealed, a new color, reserved to the eyes of those who love.

I would like to quote, in conclusion, a sentence of Jesus that is only reported in the Greek Gospels. Although the text is found in the best codas, the Vulgate removed it because an expression of this kind created a certain embarrassment for those in power. It is found in the Gospel of Luke, when it is stated that the Sabbath is for men and not men for the Sabbath.⁶ The text says, with the extraordinary concision of the Greek *koine*, "Jesus was walking with his disciples in the meadows of Galilee, and he saw a man who was working on the Sabbath day, and he said to him: *Anthrópe, macarios ei . . .* Man, you are blessed if you know what you are doing; if you do not know, you are cursed and you will be destroyed by the Law." If you know what you are doing and you violate the Sabbath with all your courage and your responsibility, you are blessed. If you do not know, then you are a transgressor and damned by the law. It is this, I think, that we must do: know how to be transgressors, taking responsibility for ourselves. The dilemma is this and none other. So everything falls to us and from this is born hope, joy, and also the risk of life.

There is, however, a fundamental difficulty: when we say that it is necessary to change the constituent parameters of contemporary civilization, Westerners feel disoriented and they become more fatalistic than Easterners. They do not think that it is possible to emancipate oneself from modern technology, which is antihuman and antinatural. Unlike *techné*,⁷ in which it is necessary to be inspired to do things, with technology you just need to multiply, nothing else. Technology is the fruit of the marriage of modern science and economics: 90 percent of all scientific research is subsidized both by the state and by large corporations, as it serves exclusively commercial interests. Modern science is therefore an unnatural way of using human capacities, instead of being *gnósis*, awareness, an act of love whereby we become what we know and for which Man is Man. We must have the courage to leave behind us this attitude that has dominated culture for 450 years and move toward a change, if we do not want to live in a world in which machines are in charge.

⁴ Besides the senses and the intellect; see the "third eye" here below.

⁵ "Surviving" and "living" are expressed with two verbs with the same root in the original Italian text: *sopravvivere, vivere*.

⁶ See Mk 2:27; Lk 6:5.

⁷ "Technique" as craftsmanship.

At this point we are adults. We are emancipated from magic, God, and ideologies, and we have entrusted ourselves to the mechanism of a mega-machine that obliges us to live as we would not like to, and impedes us even from dreaming that life could be different. Dreaming of this possibility, showing it in the concreteness of daily life—without theorizing about a great revolution—is the most important task of our time.

SECTION II
SECULARITY AND POLITICS



Part 1

IS THE NOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS A WESTERN CONCEPT?*

We should approach this topic with great fear and respect. It is not a merely "academic" issue. Human rights are trampled upon in the East as in the West, in the North as in the South of our planet. Granting the part of human greed and sheer evil in this universal transgression, could it not also be that human rights are not observed because in their present form they do not represent a universal symbol powerful enough to elicit understanding and agreement?

No culture, tradition, ideology, or religion can today speak to the whole of humankind, let alone solve its problems. Dialogue and intercourse leading to a mutual fecundation are necessary. But sometimes the very conditions for dialogue are not given, because there are unspoken conditions that most partners cannot meet. It is a fact that the present-day formulation of human rights is the fruit of a very partial dialogue among the cultures of the world. It is only recently that this question has been acutely felt.¹

I shall not enter into the details of the history of human rights, nor into an analysis of their nature. I shall confine myself to the interrogation implied in the title: Are human rights a universal invariant?

* This is the translation of the original French text which appeared in *Diogène*, no. 120 (1982): 87–115. It is an expanded and revised version of the text written by the author for the Dakar Colloquia on the Philosophical Foundations of Human Rights, the annual meeting of the International Institute of Philosophy, December 27–31, 1980.

¹ See probably the first symposium of its kind convened by UNESCO at Bangkok in December 1979, Meeting of the Experts on the Place of Human Rights in Cultural and Religious Traditions, where nine major schools of religious thought discussed the issue and recognized "that many of them had not paid sufficient attention to human rights. . . [And that] it is a task of the different religions of the world to deepen and eventually to enlarge and/or reformulate the urgent and important issue of human rights" (116g of the Final Report SS-79/CONF.607/10, 1980). The entire report is worth reading.

THE METHOD OF INQUIRY

Diatopical Hermeneutics

It is claimed that human rights are universal. This alone entails a major philosophical query. Does it make sense to ask about conditions of universality when the very question about conditions of universality is far from universal? Philosophy can no longer ignore this intercultural problematic. Can we extrapolate the concept of human rights from the context of the culture and history in which it was conceived, into a globally valid notion? Could it at least *become* a universal symbol? Or is it only one particular way of expressing—and solving—the *humanum*?

Although the question posed in the title is a legitimate one, there is something disturbing in this formulation as it was given to me. At least at first glance, it would seem to offer only one alternative: either the notion of universal human rights is a Western notion or it is not. If it is, besides being a tacit indictment against those who do not possess such a valuable concept, its introduction into other cultures, even if necessary, would appear as a plain imposition from outside. It would appear, once again, as a continuation of the colonial syndrome, namely the belief that the constructs of one particular culture (God, Church, Empire, Western Civilization, Science, Modern Technology, etc.) have, if not the monopoly, at least the privilege of possessing a universal value that entitles them to be spread over all the Earth. If not—that is, if the concept of universal human rights is not exclusively a Western concept—it would be difficult to deny that many a culture has let it slumber, thus again giving rise to an impression of the indisputable superiority of Western culture. There is nothing wrong in admitting a hierarchy of cultures, but this hierarchical order cannot be assumed as the starting point, nor can one side alone lay down the criteria necessary for establishing such a hierarchy. There is then a prior question implied by asking whether the notion of human rights is a Western concept. It is the question regarding the very nature of human rights, and it directly submits this notion to cross-cultural scrutiny.

Our question is a case in point of *diatopics*: the problem is how, from the *topos* of one culture, to understand the construct of another.¹ It is wrongheaded methodology to begin by asking, does another culture also have the notion of human rights?—assuming that such a notion is absolutely indispensable to guarantee human dignity. No question is neutral, for every question conditions its possible answers.

¹ By diatopical hermeneutics I understand: (1) a thematic reflection on the fact that the *loci (topoi)* of historically unrelated cultures make it problematic to understand one tradition with the tools of another, and (2) the hermeneutical attempt to bridge such gulfs. See R. Panikkar, *Myth, Faith, and Hermeneutics* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 8ff.

The Homeomorphic Equivalent

I was once asked to give the Sanskrit equivalents of the twenty-five key Latin words supposed to be emblematic of Western culture. I declined, on the grounds that that which is the foundation of one culture need not be the foundation for another. Meanings are not transferable here. Translations are more delicate than heart transplants. So what must we do? We must dig down to where a homogeneous soil or a similar problematic appears: we must search out the *homeomorphic equivalent*—to the concept of human rights in this case. "Homeomorphism is not the same as analogy; it represents a peculiar functional equivalence discovered through a topological transformation." It is "a kind of existential functional analogy."²

Thus we are not seeking merely to transliterate human rights into other cultural languages, nor should we be looking for mere analogies; we try instead to find the homeomorphic equivalent. If, for instance, human rights are considered to be the basis for the exercise of and respect for human dignity, we should investigate how another culture satisfies the equivalent need—and this can be done only once a common ground (a mutually understandable language) has been worked out between the two cultures. Or perhaps we should ask how the idea of a just social and political order could be formulated within a certain culture, and investigate whether the concept of human rights is a particularly appropriate way of expressing this order. A traditional Confucian might see this problem of order and rights as a question of "good manners" or in terms of his profoundly ceremonial or ritual conception of human intercourse, in terms of *li*. A Hindū might see it another way, and so on.

* * *

In order to clarify the question of our title, I shall indicate some of the assumptions on which the notion of human rights is based and immediately insert some cross-cultural reflections that will lead us to the locus—the context—of the question and the justification for my answer, which I would like to anticipate by means of a simile: human rights are one window through which one particular culture envisages a just human order for its individuals. But those who live in that culture do not see the window. For this they need the help of another culture, which sees through another window. Now I assume that the human landscape as seen through the one window is both similar to and different from the vision of the other. If this is the case, should we smash the windows and make of the many portals a single gaping aperture—with the consequent danger of structural collapse—or should we enlarge the viewpoints as much as possible and, most of all, make people aware that there are—and have to be—a plurality of windows? This latter option would be the one in favor of a healthy pluralism. This is much more than a merely academic question. There can be no serious talk about cultural pluralism without a genuine socioeconomic-political pluralism. This is, for example, what has led intellectual groups in India to ask whether "civil rights" are not incompatible with "economic rights." At any rate, to speak of cultural pluralism within what could be called a pan-economic ideology makes little sense and amounts to treating the other cultures of the world as mere folklore. The example of the notion of Dharma from the Indian tradition will offer us a point of reference from which to formulate our conclusion.

² See R. Panikkar, *The Interreligious Dialogue* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), xxii. The two words Brahman and God, for instance, are neither analogous nor merely equivocal (nor univocal, of course). They are not exactly equivalent either. They are homeomorphic. They perform a certain type of respectively corresponding function in the two different traditions where these words are alive.

ASSUMPTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE WESTERN CONCEPT

I take the expression "Human Rights" in the sense of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948.¹ The Western, mainly liberal Protestant roots of the Human Rights declaration are well known.² The Western world has known of the struggle for citizens' rights since the Middle Ages.³ This struggle for concrete rights, rooted in the practices and value system of a particular nation or country, is felt with greater urgency after the French Revolution.⁴ Western Man passes from a corporate belonging in a community of blood, work, and historical destiny,

¹ I capitalize "Human Rights" when these words have the particular meaning derived from the UN's Universal Declaration.

² The dates to recall are:

- December 10, 1948—Universal Declaration of San Francisco
- November 4, 1950—Mandatory International Law
- March 20, 1953—Paris Clause
- December 16, 1966—Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- Optional Protocol (to the latter—not passed unanimously)

³ For the astounding documents of the first nine Christian centuries, see the collection and translation with insightful introduction by H. Rahner, *Kirche und Staat* (Munich: Kösel, 1961). The first edition, published in 1943 during World War II with the title *Abendländische Kirchenfreiheit*, is in itself a document for human rights.

Because it is less known than the Magna Carta of King John of England in 1215, let us mention King Alfonso IX of Leon in 1188 with his rights to life, honor, home, and property.

Interesting also is the statement and justification of Francisco De Vitoria in 1538: "Cuando los subditos tengan conciencia de la injusticia de la guerra, no les es lícito ir a ella, sea que se equivoquen o no" (emphasis added) (*De los Indios o del derecho de la guerra* II.23 [Madrid: BAC, 831]. "When its subjects are aware of the injustice of a war, it is not lawful for them to go to it, whether they are in error or not"). And the reason he gives is to quote Rom 14:23: "Omne quod non est ex fide peccatum est," which he translates, "Todo lo que no es signum conciencia es peccado" (*ibid.*, emphasis added). The Pauline passage is usually rendered, "Whatever does not come from faith is sin." Vitoria's variation reads, "Whatever is not in accordance with one's conscience is a sin." See the Thomistic principle that the rational being that is Man has to follow his or her personal conscience in order to act morally.

⁴ For memory's sake, we may recall

- 1689—Bill of Rights
- 1776—Virginia Bill of Rights
- 1789 (August 26)—Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen
- 1798—American Bill of Rights

based on practically accepted custom and theoretically acknowledged authority, to a society based on impersonal law and ideally free contract, to the modern State, for which explicitly rational norms and duties are required. The problem becomes increasingly acute with the growth of individualism.

This paper assumes knowledge of the history of Human Rights, as well as of the fact that this transition from one form of collective life to another more modern form is said today to have acquired a worldwide character. We would like to concentrate on the more strictly philosophical *assumptions* that seem to be at the basis of the Declaration.

1. At the basis of the discourse on Human Rights there is the assumption of a *universal human nature* common to all peoples. Otherwise, a universal declaration could not logically have been proclaimed. This idea in its turn is connected with the old notion of a natural law.

But the contemporary Declaration of Human Rights further implies the following:

a. That this human nature must be *knowable*. Accepting human nature uncritically or mythically is one thing; knowing it is another. Otherwise, the Declaration could not speak and legislate about Rights that are universal.

b. That this human nature is known by means of an equally universal organ of knowledge, generally called *reason*. Otherwise, if its knowledge should depend on a special intuition, revelation, faith, decree of a prophet, or the like, Human Rights could not be taken as natural rights—*inherent in Man*. This must be a commonly held knowledge. Otherwise, Human Rights could not be declared universal by an assembly that does not claim to have a privileged epistemological status. This is made plain by the use of the word “declaration,” which stresses the fact that it is not an imposition from above but a public explication, a making clear of what is inherent in the very nature of Man.⁵

c. That this human nature is essentially *different* from the rest of reality.

Other living beings inferior to Man obviously have no Human Rights, and creatures superior to Man are likely not to exist. Man is the master of himself and the universe. He is the supreme legislator on Earth—the question of whether a Supreme Being exists or not remains open, but ineffective.⁶

2. The second assumption is that of the *dignity of the individual*. Each individual is, in a certain sense, absolute, irreducible to another. This is probably the major thrust of the modern question of Human Rights. Human Rights defend the dignity of the individual *vis-à-vis* Society at large, and the State in particular.

But this in turn implies the following:

a. Not only the distinction but also the *separation* between individual and society. In this view the human being is fundamentally the individual. Society is a kind of superstructure,

⁵ The San Francisco document is a *declaration*, a manifest statement making clear what is already there, an explication (*declarare*, to make clear—from, *de-clarare*. Cf. *clarus*, clear, but also loud (*clamor*). It is not a law, a superimposition, or a human creation, but the recognition or discovery of something intrinsic to the nature of the thing—in this case “the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all the members of the human family,” as the Preamble of the 1948 Declaration says.

⁶ This practical atheism and even practical ignorance of any ulterior philosophical issue or religious factor became patent in the presentation and discussion of the Bangkok Conference mentioned earlier, let alone in the more official meetings where philosophy and religion have hardly a voice.

which can easily become a menace and also an alienating factor for the individual. Human Rights are there primarily to protect the individual.

b. The *autonomy* of humankind vis-à-vis and often versus the cosmos. This is clearly shown in the ironic ambivalence of the English expression, which means at the same time "*Menschenrechte*," "*droits de l'Homme*," and also "*Menschliche Rechte*," "*droits humains*" (human rights). The cosmos is a kind of understructure. The individual stands between Society and World. Human Rights defend the autonomy of the human individual.

c. Resonances of the idea of Man as *microcosmos* and reverberation of the conviction that Man is *imago dei*, and at the same time the relative independence of this conviction from ontological and theological formulations. The individual has an inalienable dignity because he is an end in himself and a kind of absolute. You can cut off a finger for the sake of the entire body, but can you kill one person to save another?

3. The third assumption is that of a *democratic social order*. Society is assumed to be not a hierarchical order founded on a divine will or law or mythical origin, but a sum of "free" individuals organized to achieve otherwise unreachable goals. Human Rights, once again, serve mainly to protect the individual. Society here is not seen as a family or a protection, but as something unavoidable that can easily abase the power conferred on it (precisely by the assent of the sum of its individuals). This Society crystallizes in the State, which theoretically expresses the will of the people, or at least of the majority. The idea of an Empire, or a People, or a Nation with a transcendent destiny—whose duty it is to carry through the entrusted mission independent of the will of the members of that society—still exists today in some theocratic states, but even most of these try to palliate their messianic vocation by democratic endorsements.

This implies the following:

a. That each individual is seen as equally important and thus equally responsible for the welfare of society. Hence the individual has the right to stand by his or her convictions and propagate them or to resist impositions against his or her inherent freedom.

b. That Society is nothing but the sum total of the individuals whose wills are sovereign and ultimately decisive.⁷ There is no instance superior to Society. Even if there were to exist a God or a superhuman Reality, this too would be filtered through human consciousness and human intuitions.

c. that the rights and freedoms of individuals can be limited only when they impinge upon the rights and freedoms of other individuals, and in this way majority rule is rationally justified.⁸ And when the rights of an individual are curtailed by "reasons of State," this is allegedly justified by the fact that the State is supposed to embody the will and the interests of the majority. It is interesting to note that the Universal Declaration speaks

⁷ See R. Panikkar, "Singularity and Individuality: The Double Principle of Individuation," *Revue internationale de philosophie* 29 (111–112) (1975): 141–66, where it is argued that the ontic status of human individuals is basically different from that of all other individual entities: in short, that we cannot treat human individuals as we could peanuts or cattle, by a merely numerical individuality.

⁸ "The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government" (Art. 21.2 of the Declaration).

⁹ In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law *solely* for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order, and the general welfare in a democratic society (see Art. 29.2, emphasis added).

of "freedoms" in the plural, and even more intriguingly, of "fundamental freedoms." The individualization does not stop at the individual, but divides this segregated entity even further into separated freedoms.

In enumerating these assumptions and implications I do not mean to say that they were actually in the minds of the framers of the Declaration. In fact, evidence suggests that no unanimity could be found regarding the basis of the rights that were being declared. But the Declaration clearly was articulated along the lines of the historical trends of the Western world during the last three centuries, and in tune with a certain philosophical anthropology or individualistic humanism that helped justify them.

CROSS-CULTURAL REFLECTIONS

Is the Concept of Human Rights a Universal Concept?

The answer is a plain *no*. Three reasons vouch for it.

1. No concept as such is universal. Each concept is valid primarily where it was conceived. If we want to extend its validity beyond its own context, we shall have to justify the extrapolation. Even mathematical concepts imply the previous acknowledgment of a limited field defined by the axioms we postulate. Furthermore, every concept tends to be univocal. To accept the possibility of universal concepts would imply a strictly rationalistic conception of reality. But even if this were the theoretical truth, it would not be the actual case, because humankind *de facto* presents a plurality of universes of discourse. To accept the fact that that concept of Human Rights *is* not universal does not yet mean that it *should not become so*. Now in order for a concept to become universally valid it should fulfill at least two conditions. It should, on the one hand, eliminate all the other contradictory concepts. This may seem improbable, but there is a logical necessity here, and theoretically it would all be for the best. On the other hand, it should be the universal point of reference for any problematic regarding human dignity. In other words, it should displace all other homeomorphic equivalents and be the pivotal center of a just social order. Put yet another way, the culture that has given birth to the concept of Human Rights should also be called upon to become a universal culture. This may well be one of the causes of a certain uneasiness one senses in non-Western thinkers who study the question of Human Rights. They fear for the identity of their own cultures.

2. Within the vast field of Western culture itself, the very assumptions that serve to situate our problematic are not universally recognized. The particular origin of the formulation of Human Rights is sufficiently well known. Probably the most important sources of dissent are the following three:¹

a. Theology. Human Rights need to be grounded, says the theological view, in a superior, transcendent, and therefore unmanipulable value, whose traditional symbol is God as origin and guarantor of both human rights and duties. Otherwise, they are only a political device in the hands of the powerful. According to this view, the Declaration suffers from a naïve optimism regarding the goodness and autonomy of human nature. Moreover, it implies a

¹ We do not include here a fourth source of dissent, namely the political, because the argument in such cases bears mainly on different interpretations of facts, emphases, and factors other than those related to the nature of Human Rights. See as a single example *Colloque de Riyad, du Vatican, de Genève et de Strasbourg sur le dogme musulman et les droits de l'homme en Islam* (Riyadh: Ministère de la Justice, 1974 / Beyrouth: Dar Al Kitab, 1974); and D. Sidorsky, *Essays on Human Rights, Contemporary Issues and Jewish Perspective* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979).

deficient anthropology, inasmuch as it seems to view the human person as merely a bundle of needs, material and psychological, of which it then proceeds to make an inventory.² Finally, in case of doubt or conflict, who is going to decide? Majority rule is only a euphemism for the law of the jungle: the power of the strongest.

b. Marxism. For the Marxist, so-called Human Rights are merely "*Classenrechte*," class rights.³ "There are no rights without duties and no duties without rights."⁴ They reflect the interests of a certain class and in many cases only its aspirations. There is no mention of the economic conditions for the effective realization of what are said to be universal human claims. Furthermore, there is something abstract and too general about most of these rights; they are not sufficiently grounded in the material and cultural reality of particular groups. Finally, their individualism is evident. The individual is conceived as being in confrontation with (rather than included in) society, although the latter is said to be the result of freely contracting individuals. Society is not merely the sum total of individuals, and it has rights that the individual may not violate. History has transcendent power.

c. History. "Human Rights" appear to some students of recent history as another example of the more or less conscious domination exerted by the powerful nations to maintain their privileges and defend the status quo. Human rights continue to be a political weapon. Human rights were known long ago but only for elite noblemen, or the free citizen, or for whites or Christians or males, and so on, when they were hastily applied to "human beings" it was often defined just which groups belonging to the race could properly be styled "human." If not all humans had human rights, the claim of human rights on behalf of animals, plants, and things would seem and still does seem bizarre, not to say ridiculous, in spite of occasional remonstrances delivered by societies for the protection of animals. Animals and such may very well have rights, but not human ones. And as we have seen, this particular notion of the "human" has not always been very humane. And who is to speak for the whole? History discloses that only the victors declare and promulgate "rights," which are simply what the powerful consider right at any given time.

3. From a cross-cultural stance the problem appears exclusively Western, that is, the question itself is at stake. Most of the assumptions and implications enumerated earlier are simply not given in other cultures. Furthermore, from a non-Western point of view the problem itself is not seen as such, so that it is not merely a question of agreeing or disagreeing with the answer. If anything, the problem is that the issue is experienced in a radically different way. A *diatopical* hermeneutic does not deal with just another point of view on the *same* problem. At issue here is not simply the answer, but the problem itself.

Now is it possible to have access to other *topoi* so that we may be able to understand other cultures from within, that is, as they understand themselves? We may not be able to jump over our own categories of understanding, but it may not be impossible to have one foot in one culture and another in a second. Generally, we have only one culture as we have only one mother tongue—but we may also have a father tongue. We cannot a priori deny this possibility. I recall that, in certain parts of the East, to be illiterate means to know only a single language. It is in dialogue with others that we can encompass our common

² "Human rights, in short, are statements of basic needs and interests" (S. I. Benn, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [New York: Macmillan, 1967], s.v. "Rights," speaking about the UN Declaration).

³ See K. Marx, *Zur Judenfrage* 1.352.

⁴ "Keine Rechte ohne Pflichten ohne Rechte" (Marx and Engels, *Werke* XVI.521, *apud* G. Klaus and M. Buhr, *Philosophische Wörterbuch* [Leipzig: VEB, 1976], s.v. "Menschenrechte").

ground. We may not integrate more than one culture in ourselves, but we may open the possibility of a wider and deeper integration by opening ourselves, in dialogue, to others.

The following parallelism may be instructive. To assume that without the explicit recognition of Human Rights, life would be catholic and have no meaning belongs to the same order of ideas as to think that without the belief in one God as understood in the Abrahamic tradition, human life would dissolve itself in total anarchy. This line of thinking leads to the belief that atheists, Buddhists, and animists, for instance, should be considered as human aberrations. In the same vein: either Human Rights, or chaos. This attitude does not belong exclusively to Western culture. To call the stranger a barbarian is all too common an attitude among the peoples of the world. And as we mention later, there is a legitimate and inbuilt claim to universality in any affirmation of truth. The problem is that we tend to identify the limits of our own vision with the human horizon.

Transcultural Critique

There are no values that transcend the plurality of cultures for the simple reason that a value exists as such only in a given cultural context.⁵ But there may be transcultural values, and a transcultural critique is indeed possible. The latter does not consist in evaluating one cultural construct with the categories of another, but in trying to understand and criticize one particular human problem with the tools of understanding of the different cultures concerned, while at the same time taking thematically into consideration that the very awareness and, much more, the formulation of the problem are already culturally bound. Our question is then to examine the possible transcultural value of the question of Human Rights, an effort that begins by delimiting the cultural boundaries of the concept. The dangers of cultural West-centrism are only too patent today.

1. We have already mentioned the particular historical origins of the Declaration of Human Rights. To claim universal validity for Human Rights in the formulated sense implies the belief that most of the peoples of the world today are engaged in much the same way as the Western nations in a process of transition from more or less mythical *Gemeinshaften* (feudal principalities, self-governing cities, guilds, local communities, tribal institutions) to a "rationally" and "contractually" organized "modernity" as known to the Western industrialized world. This is a questionable assumption. No one can predict the evolution (or eventual disintegration) of those traditional societies that have started from different material and cultural bases and whose reaction to modern Western civilization may therefore follow hitherto unknown lines.

Further, the very powerful Declaration of Human Rights also shows its weakness from another point of view. Something has been lost when it has to be explicitly declared. As the Chinese say, It is when *yī* (justice) declines that *lì* (ritual) arises.⁶ Or as the British and Spaniards repeat, There are things that you take for granted and about which you do not speak. In some traditional societies, you cannot boast of being noble or a friend of the royal family because the very moment you do so, you lose your nobility and your friendship with the reigning house.⁷ When Human Rights are declared this is a sign that the very foundation

⁵ See R. Panikkar, "Aporias in the Comparative Philosophy of Religion," *Man in the World* 13, no. 3-4 (1980): 357-83.

⁶ *Tao-te Ching*, 18.

⁷ The *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (2-4) puts the same idea in a more sophisticated way: To act from

on which they rest has already been weakened. The Declaration only postpones the collapse. In traditional words, when the taboo of the sacred disappears, sacredness fades away to the point of vanishing. If you have to teach a mother to love her child, something is amiss with motherhood. Or, as some theoreticians of Human Rights have also recognized, the legislation on Human Rights is introduced in order to find a justification for contravening somebody else's freedom. Putting it positively, you need some justification to encroach on somebody's field of activity.

I am not saying this in order to revert to utopian dreams of an earthly paradise, but just to sound another voice. You may promulgate laws, but you do not declare what is the case—unless it has ceased to be evident; you do not proclaim an "ought" if there are no transgressions at all.

2. We may now briefly reconsider the three assumptions mentioned above. They may pass muster, insofar as they express an authentically valid human issue from one particular context. But the very context may be susceptible to a legitimate critique from the perspective of other cultures. To do this systematically would require that we choose one culture after another and examine the assumptions of the Declaration in the light of each culture chosen. We limit ourselves here to token reflections under the very broad umbrella of a premodern, non-Western state of mind.

a. There is certainly a *universal human nature*, first of all, this nature does not need to be segregated and fundamentally distinct from the nature of all living beings and/or the entire reality. Thus, exclusively Human Rights would be seen as a violation of "cosmic rights" and an example of self-defeating anthropocentrism, a novel kind of apartheid. To retort that "cosmic rights" is a meaningless expression would only betray the underlying cosmology of the objection, for which the phrase makes no sense. But the existence of a different cosmology is precisely what is at stake here. We speak of the laws of nature; why not also of her rights?

Second, the interpretation of this "universal human nature," that is, Man's self-understanding, belongs equally to this human nature. Thus, to single out one particular interpretation of it may be valid, but it is not universal and may not apply to the entirety of human nature.

Third, to proclaim the undoubtedly positive concept of Human Rights may turn out to be a Trojan horse, surreptitiously introduced into other civilizations that will then all but be obliged to accept those ways of living, thinking, and feeling for which Human Rights are the proper solution in cases of conflict. It is a little like the way technology is often introduced in many parts of the world: it is imported to solve the problems that it has itself created. We have already made reference to this, when criticizing the universalization of the concept of Human Rights.

b. Nothing could be more important than to underscore and defend the *dignity of the human person*. But, the person should be distinguished from the individual. The individual is just an abstraction, that is, a selection of a few aspects of the person for practical purposes. My person, on the other hand, is also in "my" parents, children, friends, foes, ancestors, and successors. "My" person is also in "my" ideas and feelings and in "my" belongings. If you hurt "me," you are equally damaging my whole clan, and possibly yourself as well. Rights cannot be individualized in this way. In the case of abortion, is it the right of the mother, or

a desire for reward is reprehensible. Yet without that desire, no action is possible. Laws are needed to put order into those human actions.

the child? Or perhaps of the father and relatives as well? Rights cannot be abstracted from duties; the two are correlated. The dignity of the human person may equally be violated by your language or by your desecrating a place I consider holy, even though it does not "belong" to me in the sense of individualized private property. You may have "bought" it for a sum of money, while it belongs to me by virtue of another order altogether. An individual is an isolated knot; a person is the entire fabric around that knot, woven from the total fabric of the real. The limits to a person are not fixed; they depend utterly on his or her personality. Certainly without the knots, the net would collapse—but without the net, the knots would not even exist.

To defend too aggressively my individual rights, for instance, may have negative, that is, unjust, repercussions on others and perhaps even on myself. The need for consensus in many traditions—instead of majority opinion—is based precisely on the corporate nature of human rights.

A paragraph on the language is required here. Each language has its own genius and its own particular way to see the world and even to be it and in it. But from a cross-cultural perspective, each language has to show the flexibility necessary to incorporate other human experiences. I know that in current English "individual" is synonymous with "person," but this should not prevent me from using these two words in the sense I have suggested, and from recognizing a particular human trend that tends to identify the human being with the most salient features of a gross "individualized" body or at least to inscribe it within that framework. In drawing the distinction between individual and person I would put much more content in it than a French moral philosophy would do nowadays. For instance, I would like to adduce this case as a particular instance of two radically different anthropologies.

c. Democracy is also a great value and infinitely better than any dictatorship. But it amounts to tyranny to put the peoples of the world under the alternative of choosing either democracy or dictatorship. Human Rights are tied to democracy. Individuals need to be protected when the structure that is above them (Society, the State, or the dictator—by whatever name) is not qualitatively superior to them, that is, when it does not belong to a higher order.

Human Rights are a legal device for the protection of smaller numbers of people (the minority or the individual) faced with the power of greater numbers. This implies a quantitative reductionism; the person is reduced to the individual and the individual to the basis of society. I may put it more positively by saying that it is the way by which the individual as cornerstone of society is protected, and his or her dignity recognized. In a hierarchical conception of reality, the particular human being cannot defend his or her rights by demanding or exacting them independently of the whole. The wounded order has to be set straight again, or it has to change altogether. Other traditional societies have different means to more or less successfully restore the order. The raja may fail in his duty to protect the people, but will a declaration of Human Rights be a corrective unless it also has the power to constrain the raja? Can a democracy be imposed and remain democratic?

* A recent example: A Catholic missionary, after over a year of really living together with an Asian tribe and sharing with the people their respective beliefs, thinks that the moment has come for some formal conversions, since they are already practically Christians. He talks matters over with the enthusiasts about Christianity: "Would you like to become officially and publicly Christians? You are already convinced," etc. Answer: "No, because some other people in the tribe are not ready." "But it is your *right*!" says the missionary. "You have the *right* to decide by yourselves—all the more since you neither harm nor despise the others." The answer is cutting: "We only have the right to take this step

The policy of nonalignment subscribed to by many countries of Africa and Asia here strikes a much deeper chord than possible political opportunities, or just another way of being relevant in the contemporary political scene. It represents precisely this refusal to admit the vision of the world as a function of the just-mentioned set of dilemmas represented by the so-called superpowers.

In short, the transcultural critique does not invalidate the Declaration of Human Rights, but offers new perspectives for an internal criticism and sets the limits of the validity of Human Rights, offering at the same time both possibilities for enlarging its realm, if the context changes, and of a mutual fecundation with other conceptions of Man and Reality.

Should the Symbol of Human Rights be A Universal Symbol?

It should be noted that I speak here of Human Rights as a symbol that, unlike a concept, is by its nature polyvalent and polysemic.

The answer to the question in the chapter title is yes, and no.

a. Yes. When a culture as a whole discovers and holds certain values as ultimate, these values must have a certain universal meaning. Only collective and culturally expressed universal values may be said to be human values. A merely private value cannot be called a *human* value. It is a human value, but not necessarily a value for every human—as Human Rights claim to be. As a matter of fact, Human Rights come as a corrective to the former exclusive rights of the Whites, the Believers, the Rich, the Brahmins, and others—without meaning to touch legitimate privileges in the traditional sense of the word. The Declaration of Human Rights must be considered, at least in its intention, as a declaration with universal validity. To say that Human Rights are not universal would amount to saying that they are not human; they would cease to be *Human Rights*. The whole novelty of the Declaration lies precisely here, in the assertion that every human being, by the mere fact of being human, is endowed with inalienable rights that everybody should respect.

In that sense we may have in the Declaration of Human Rights something rather unique and revolutionary. Here indeed we have the positive side of the individual vis-à-vis the person. Every single human being in its individuality, by the very fact of being born, has a dignity and rights equal to any other. It is not one's place in society, or degree of civilization, or intellectual, moral, or religious endowments that count. Certainly, limits immediately appear: you may be subnormal or abnormal, and not only physically, but also morally—or, others would also add, intellectually or religiously. But the naked fact of being born is the universal symbol on which Human Rights is based. From this point of view, the claim to universality of Human Rights has found a solid basis.

Paradoxically enough, the Christian origin of this belief has been the cause of some of its degradation, that is, when it became an ideology, a doctrine to serve the interests of one particular group. Everybody is born free and equal. All human beings are equal in the sight of God; every human person has the same rights as any other. Nonetheless, in order to justify the fact that the unbaptized, or the Negro or slave or female or whoever, did not have the same rights, one was compelled to claim that they were not fully human beings, as history cruelly witnesses.

if the whole tribe does it."

b. *No.* Because each culture expresses its experience of reality and of the *humanum* in concepts and symbols that are proper to that tradition and are as such not universal, and most likely not universalizable. This relationship between truth and the expression of truth in concepts and symbols is one of the most central philosophical problems. Truth has the inbuilt claim to be universally valid, here and there, yesterday and tomorrow, for you and for me. Yet my grasping and formulating it cannot sustain the same claim without charging all the others who do not agree with me with stupidity or wickedness. Hence the necessary via media between agnostic relativism and dogmatic absolutism. This is what can be called *relativity*.

Our particular case is a typical example of the *paris pro toto*: from the optic of the inside it looks like the whole; from the outside it looks like a part, a fragment. Similarly, are Human Rights universal from the vantage point of modern Western culture, and not universal from the outside the *totum in parte*? Can another culture see in the Human Rights a universal language? Or should we say that it is only one way of looking at things, one way of speaking?

The answer that claims to discover the *totum in parte* is appealing, but not convincing. This is the temptation of the intellectual, who senses that any affirmation has the inbuilt tendency to be universally valid—or of the politician who, having neither the time nor the inclination to engage in such reflections, would like to see the *totum* in the *parte* of this party. But then we tend to become the self-appointed judges of all humankind. Now philosophy, being a situated reflection, makes us aware that nobody has direct access to the universal range of human experience. We can only indirectly and through a limited perspective come to know the totality. Even were we to know all the existing human opinions, ours would amount to just another opinion. One cannot view the *totum* except in and through one's own window. This is the case not only because the whole is more than the sum of its parts, but also because that *totum* does not exist independent from the *parte* through which it is seen. It is only seen in and through the respective *parte*, and there is no stance from which one could proceed to the integration of all the parts. Coexistence is only possible on a common ground, a *co-esse* recognized by the different parties. Here lies the crux. We cannot but aim at the *totum*, and yet we often forget that all we see is the *paris* that we then take *pro toto*. If a Christian, to offer another example, were to say that Christ is not the universal savior, according to accepted custom he or she would cease to be a Christian. But a non-Christian cannot, and should not, agree with this. It is only in mutual dialogue that their respective views will change or evolve. Christ will be for the Christian the symbol of the totality; for the non-Christian, only the symbol of the Christians. Myriad examples from the past, especially regarding the West, are all too striking for one not to be wary of the danger of repeating what was done in the name of the one God, the One Empire, the one Religion, and what is nowadays being done under the aegis of the one Science and the one Technology.

In brief, we need a new hermeneutic: the diatopical hermeneutic that can only be developed in a *dialogical* dialogue. This would show us that we must take neither the *paris pro toto*, nor believe that we see the *totum in parte*. We must accept what our partner tells us: simply that we take the *totus pro parte*, when we are aware of the *paris pro toto*—which is obviously what we will retort right back to him. This is the human condition, and I would not consider it to be an imperfection. This, again, is the topic of pluralism.

Let us consider now an example of a different perspective without attempting to present any homeomorphic equivalent.

AN INDIAN REFLECTION

The word "Indian" here has no political connotations. It does not refer to the "nation" with the third-largest Islamic population in the world, but to the traditional Hindū, Jain, and Buddhist conceptions of reality.

Dharma (*dbhāma*) is perhaps the most fundamental word in the Indian tradition that could lead us to the discovery of a possible homeomorphic symbol corresponding to the Western notion of "Human Rights." I am not advancing the idea that Dharma is the homeomorphic equivalent of Human Rights. I am only indicating that a reflection at the level of Dharma may help us find our footing on a common ground, so that we may know what we are looking for when we set out on our search for "Human Rights" in the classical Indian context.

As is well known, the meaning of the word "Dharma" is multivocal: besides element, data, quality, and origination, it means law, norm of conduct, character of things, right, Truth, ritual, morality, justice, righteousness, religion, destiny, and many other things. It would not lead us anywhere to try to find an English common denominator for all these names, but perhaps etymology can show us the root metaphor underlying the many meanings of the word.¹

Dharma is that which maintains, gives cohesion and thus strength to any given thing, to reality, and ultimately to the three worlds (*triloka*). Justice keeps human relations together; morality keeps oneself in harmony; law is the binding principle for human relations; religion is what maintains the universe in existence; destiny is that which links us with our future; truth is the internal cohesion of a thing; a quality is what pervades a thing with a homogeneous character; an element is the minimum consistent particle, spiritual or material; and the like.

Now, a world in which the notion of Dharma is central and nearly all-pervasive is not concerned with finding the "right" of one individual against another or of the individual vis-à-vis society, but rather with establishing the *dharmic* (right, true, consistent...) or *a-dharmic* character of a thing or an action within the entire theanthropocosmic complex of reality.

Dharma is primordial. We cannot hope to understand it if we approach it with moral categories (cf. the case of the *Gita*) or even epistemological ones. It embraces both the conflict and the resolution: both the ought and the ought not. There is no universal dharma above and independent of the *svadharma*, the dharma that is inherent in every being. And this *svadharma* is at the same time a result of and a reaction to the dharma of everyone else.

The starting point here is not the individual, but the whole complex concatenation of the Real. In order to protect the world, for the sake of the protection of this universe, says Manu, the Svayambhū, the Self-existent, arranged the castes and their duties.² Dharma is

¹ From the root *dbh*, to hold, to maintain, keep together. Cf. Latin *tenere* and English *tenet*.

² *Manu* I.31 and I.87.

the order of the entire reality, that which keeps the world together.³ The individual's duty is to maintain his "rights"; it is to find one's place in relation to Society, to the Cosmos, and to the transcendent world.

It is obvious from these brief paragraphs that here the discourse on "Human Rights" would take on an altogether different character. It would distract us from the purpose of this article to look now for the homeomorphic equivalent of Human Rights in a culture pervaded with the conception of Dharma. We adduce this Indian example only to be able to elaborate in a fuller way the question of our title.

Only the submission and one observation may be allowed here so as not to leave this reflection incomplete. I submit that the homeomorphic equivalent is *svadharma*, and I make the observation that the homeomorphic equivalent does not mean the corresponding counterpart, as if all that is conveyed by Human Rights is also borne by *svadharma* or vice versa. Cultures are wholes, and do not fit into one-to-one correspondences. In order to have a just society, the modern West stresses the notion of Human Rights. In order to have a dharmic order, classical India stresses the notion of *svadharma*.

We shall now attempt to formulate without further development some reactions to the Western discourse on Human Rights from this Indian perspective. We should add immediately that this Indian critique does not imply that the Indian model is better or that Indian culture has been faithful to its fundamental intuition—as the existence of the outcastes and the degeneration of the caste system sufficiently prove.

In confrontation and dialogue with the Western model, the Indian critique would stress fundamentally that Human Rights should not be absolutized. It would contest that one can speak of Human Rights as "objective" entities standing on their own in isolation from the rest of the Real. This is what seems to be implied in the very first article of the Declaration: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

Particular rights, privileges due to a special position in society—that is, a relativization of rights—does not seem to be compatible with this article.

Developing this point, the Indian vision would insist on the following points among others.

1. Human Rights are not individual Human Rights only. The *humanum* is not incarnated in the individual *only*. The individual as such is an abstraction, and an abstraction as such cannot be an ultimate subject of rights. As we have already indicated, the individual is only the knot in and of the net of relationships that constitute the fabric of the Real. The knots may individually be all the same (either *jiva*, *ātman*, or *anātman*), but it is mainly their position in the net that determinates the set of "rights" an individual may have. Individuality is not a substantial category, but a functional one. The structure of the universe is hierarchical, but this does not imply that the higher echelons have the right to trample upon the rights of the lower ones—in spite of the dangers of this happening the moment that the harmony of the whole is disturbed.

I am not entering into the merits or demerits of this worldview. We should, however, bear in mind that this conception is intimately linked with the conception of *karma*, and thus should not be evaluated outside its proper context.

2. Human Rights are not human only. They concern equally the entire cosmic display of the universe, from which even the Gods are not absent. The animals, all the sentient beings, and

³ See the famous *lokasamgraha* of the *Gītā*, and the well-known definition of the *Mahābhārata*: "That which maintains and sustains the peoples" (*Karṇaparvam* LXIX.59).

the supposedly inanimate creatures are also involved in the interaction concerning "human" rights. Man is a peculiar being, to be sure, but neither alone nor so essentially distinct. One could even ask whether there are specific human rights, or if this specificity is again only an abstraction for pragmatic reasons that defeats its own purpose the moment we forget its merely practical character.

Here again, another cosmology and another theology provide the justification for this conception. Whether modern India, accepting and adopting modern Science as it is, will be able to maintain this conception for very long is another matter altogether. But we know also about the persistence of mythical patterns.

3. Human Rights are not Rights only. They are also duties, and both are interdependent. Humankind has the "right" to survive only insofar as it performs the duty of maintaining the world (*lokasamgraha*). We have the "right" to eat only inasmuch as we fulfill the duty of allowing ourselves to be eaten by a hierarchical higher agency. Our right is only a participation in the entire metabolic function of the universe.

We should have, if anything, a Declaration of Universal Rights and Duties in which the whole of Reality would be encompassed. Obviously, this demands not only a different anthropology but also a different cosmology and an absolutely different theology (beginning from its very name). The fact that this Declaration can be uttered only by human beings and not by animals does not annul its validity any more than how the Declaration of the Rights of Man is rendered questionable by the fact that the Naga or the Masai did not participate in the work leading to its discussion and formulation.

4. The Rights of Man cannot be isolated from each other. In addition to relating to the entire cosmos and all the corresponding duties, they also form a harmonious whole. For this reason it is not theoretically possible to make a definitive draft list of the Rights of Man. What counts, in the final analysis, is universal harmony. This assertion is not invalidated by the fact that India, like many other countries, is familiar with the codification of laws. Perhaps even more than the majority of other countries, India suffers from the narrowness of the legalistic mentality, and this occurs precisely because no legislation of a juridical type will ever suffice.

5. The Rights of Man are not absolute. They are intrinsically relative, they are relations between different entities. These entities, then, are determined by the relations themselves. To say that my value as a man depends on my position in the universe would be a caricature of what has just been said if we reasoned starting with an individual taken in himself (whose dignity would then depend on his being rich or poor, his belonging to one caste or another, etc.). This could not be accepted by the classic Indian vision (despite the disintegration of the system at a practical level and its degeneration with the passing of time). The Indian vision would start from a holistic conception, then a portion of reality would be defined according to its positioning in the whole. In a certain sense, the knot is nothing because it is the entire network.

6. Each of the systems (the Western and the Hindū) has its meaning and coherence according to and within an acquired accepted myth. Each of them implies a certain kind of consent. When this consent is challenged, a new myth needs to be found. The shattered myth is the situation of present-day India, and of the world as a whole.

Contemporary mentality cannot admit that the rights of individuals depend only on their positioning in the network of reality. But it does not seem similarly admissible that the rights of individuals are so absolute as to not depend in any way on the particular situation in which the individual finds himself.

In brief, there is currently no endogenous theory that is able to unify contemporary societies, and this role cannot be performed by any imposed or imported ideology. Cultural cross-fertilization is a human imperative in our age.

The Declaration defends the individual from abuses that the State or society can commit. The Indian vision asserts that we are a part of a harmonious whole, engaged in a pilgrimage toward a nonhistorical destination. The interactions are the chain and the fabric of the universe. Cultural and religious traditions present themselves as a whole that cannot easily be dismembered without doing violence to their insights. Hindū karma outside its context may become fatalistic. Christian charity outside its system may turn oppressive. The universalization of Human Rights is a very delicate question indeed.

5

BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

Is the concept of Human rights a Western conception?

Yes.

Should the world then renounce declaring or enforcing Human Rights?

No.

Three qualifications, however, are necessary:

1. For an authentic human life to be possible within the *megamachine* of the modern technological world, Human Rights are imperative. This is because the development of the notion of Human Rights is bound up with and given its meaning by the slow development of that megamachine. How individuals or groups or nations should collaborate with this present-day system is another question altogether. But in the contemporary political arena defined by current socioeconomic and ideological trends, the defense of Human Rights is a sacred duty. Yet it should be remembered that to introduce Human Rights (in the definite Western sense, of course) into other cultures before the introduction of *techniculture* would amount not only to putting the cart before the horse, but also to preparing the way for the technological invasion—as if by a Trojan horse, as we have already said. Yet a technological civilization without Human Rights amounts to the most inhuman situation imaginable. The dilemma is excruciating. This makes the two following points all the more important and urgent.

2. Room should be made for other world traditions to develop and formulate their own homeomorphic views corresponding to or opposing Western "rights." Or rather, these other world traditions should make room for themselves, since no one else is likely to make it for them. This is an urgent task; otherwise it will be impossible for non-Western cultures to survive, let alone to offer viable alternatives or even a sensible complement. Here the role of a cross-cultural philosophical approach is paramount. The need for human pluralism is often recognized in principle, but not often practiced, not only because of the dynamism that drives the pan-economic ideology, linked with the megamachine, to expand all over the world, but also because viable alternatives are not yet theoretically worked out.

3. An intermediary space should be found for mutual criticism that strives for mutual fecundation and enrichment. Perhaps such an interchange may help bring forth a new myth and eventually a more humane civilization. The dialogical dialogue appears as the unavoidable method.

It may be useful to offer an additional suggestion. Referring to the metaphor of the knots (individuality) and the network (personality), we could probably state that traditional

cultures have emphasized the network (family ties, the hierarchical structure of society, the function each person must perform, the role of each in relation to the whole) in such a way that often the knot has been suffocated and has not been assigned sufficient space to be able to take on its own personal identity. The modern age, on the other hand, puts the accent on the knots (individual freedom to choose an option, our idiosyncrasies, the atomization of society) in such a way that often the knot has found itself immersed in solitude, alienated as a result of its own social mobility, and wounded (or killed) in the competition with other, stronger knots. Perhaps a starting point for the desirable cross-fertilization could be found in the notion of personality understood as interaction of knots and network, as in the awareness of the principle that freedom does not merely consist of the simple possibility of choosing between predetermined options, but also the power to create options.

While numerous traditional cultures have God as a center and some others are fundamentally cosmo-centric, the culture that has emerged with the notion of the Rights of Man is distinctly anthropocentric. Perhaps we must now move toward a cosmotheandric vision of reality, in which the divine, the human, and the cosmic are integrated in a whole that will be more or less harmonious according to whether or not we fully exercise our true "human rights."

Part 2
THE SPIRIT OF POLITICS*

* Original edition: *Il "daimōn" della politica: agonia e speranza*. Translated by David Morris. (Bologna: EDB, 1994).

INTRODUCTION

The Metapolitical—A Way to Salvation

What is metapolitics? It is the anthropological foundation of that which is political. This work is the study of the transcendental relationship between politics and what sustains and grounds it: the meaning of life. This relationship is transcendental because it is a constitutive factor of life. The mystery of life lies hidden in any human activity. Metapolitics heals the rift between political activity and the rest of human life. Reality is neither monistic nor dualistic. Metapolitics is the meeting place between the political activity of Man and his final destiny (however we may call it); it is the point of intersection between Man and the Whole.

How can we find this dimension? And, once found, how can we adopt a realistic attitude? That is to say, how can we embrace all the aspects of reality in one sole vision, including the *res publica* (public life), and integrate the latter instead of rejecting it?

It is about discovering within the human being a nucleus that reconnects him to the political dimension, the *polis*, but is not fulfilled in political technique. Everyone forges their own destiny—their own salvation—in the political field when they discover the metapolitical meaning of their human activity.

Following a historic route from the formation of the Greek *polis* up to today, this study seeks to grasp the nature of that which is metapolitical and to describe this dimension in the context of our times.

PREFACE

The Daimôn of Politics

ἥθος ἀνθρώπῳ δαίμον
"Ethics for Man [is his] spirit."

Heraclitus, fragm. 119

History is not the whole of reality: there are dimensions of the Real and even of Man that elude history. Yet historicity is inseparable from reality. The totality of reality, as is stated in the *Veda* (*Atharva-veda* XIX.53–54), is subject to the rule of time, unless we split it in two. But who could undertake this scission? Unless it is proclaimed that eternity is unreal, or temporality is illusory. And who would be the impartial judge capable of proclaiming such? Analogically speaking, politics is not the whole of Man. There are dimensions of the human being that do not belong to politics, yet they are inseparable. I call "metapolitics" this meeting point between the political dimension and the totality of Man.

Human history cannot be reduced to a series of wars. Political activity does not exclusively consist of a set of maneuvers to obtain power. Wars form part of history; struggles for power also form part of politics. Yet there is something more, something that is not, in fact, a "plus," an additive factor, because it is a constitutive element of politics. Here is where we touch upon the metapolitical.

In political activity, Man either succeeds and is fulfilled, or fails and feels frustrated; he shapes his own destiny, from which he cannot withdraw. Politics is not a specialty of politicians, and even less of political experts. It is Man's appanage (even in the literal sense of *ad panem*), since it is politics that feeds human life, insofar as it is inseparable from the metapolitical dimension. Human life is a political existence to the extent that politics is founded on metapolitics. Not even the most a-cosmic *saṇṇyāśin* (renunciant, ascetic, errant monk) can avoid it. He attains his *mokṣa* (liberation) by liberating himself from others. The existence of others, of those who recognize him without necessarily understanding him, is essential to the *saṇṇyāśin*. It is not only *dharma* (cosmic order, religion and its practices), but also *karman* (sacred action, the result of actions within the cosmic order) that upholds the world.

The present-day world situation calls for the "mobilization of the people," we are told. But this is not about storming a Bastille called Earth. We are dealing with a type of awareness called "metapolitics." This is not a struggle for political power, but a struggle, in the sense of ascesis, to attain full human consciousness, to overcome the dichotomy between individual and collective, and between the Human and the Divine—without, however, suppressing their differences. The tensions between secular and sacred, lay and clerical, believer and

unbeliever, like the master/slave, masculine/feminine dialectics, cannot be denied, but must be integrated in a whole, without, nevertheless, falling prey to amorphous indiscrimination.

Reality is neither monist nor dualist. The polarities of the Real are maintained through their trinitarian character. Metapolitics designates the meeting place for Man's political activity and his final destiny (however we choose to call it); it defines the point at which Man is placed within the Whole.

The motto at the beginning of this essay speaks about *ethos*. It literally says that "Ethics for Man [is his] spirit." *Daimón* is what constitutes the true personality of Man, that which gives him his most profound and distinctive characteristic. *Ethos* here is the incommunicable nature of each person, their character, their dignity, their "ethicality." Ethics is not habit, routine, what others do or have done, but rather what one is—what one truly is, and not what one would wish to be. This *ethos*, therefore, is only manifested in or through the *daimón* of Man: in living out his life, in his destiny. The *daimón*, which in Greek can be masculine or feminine, but not neutral, is for Man his spirit and his soul, his demon and his angel, his perdition and his salvation, that which drives him and possesses him, the inheritance he is born into and the legacy he leaves when he dies; all that gives him both happiness (*eu-daimonia*) and its opposite, unhappiness (*kakó-daimonia*), since *daimón* is the destiny from which human beings cannot escape, inasmuch as Man is "possessed" (the verb *δαιμονῶ* means "to be possessed").

It is through his *daimón* that Man exercises his activity among his fellow men; that he directs his steps toward the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of earth, toward the world of ideas or that of machines, toward the firmament of beauty or the ocean of ambition. He may wish to flee "alone to the Alone,"¹ but he must walk upon the land of men, even if he refuses it, and even to the point of denying his own existence. *Nirvāṇa* is the extinction of the political as *samsāra* is its dynamism—and sages from the Buddhist *mādhyamikā* tradition tell us that the *nirvāṇa-samsāra* identity is above mental order; they look toward metapolitics. Those who believe in God often call him Providence. They believe in a "political" God. Those who do not believe in Him seek to reveal the meaning of chaos and evolution beyond common daily existence, that is, in transcendence; they also are in the realm of metapolitics. The root of the word *daimón* suggests the idea of destiny, and the original meaning of the word *polis*, "city," suggests a place of refuge.

Man looks for his destiny in politics. In it he finds a refuge, while at the same time he seeks to protect himself from it. Man, this being who passionately strives for freedom, liberation, salvation, is at the same time afraid of it, as if he wished he could do without it. To translate the words of Heraclitus in a modern key, we might say that *ethos*, as Man's political activity, is his demon, something demonic. Therefore, politics could be interpreted both as the Greek *daimón* and as the biblical demon.

Now, *corruptio optimi pessima*—"the corruption of the best is the worst of all." The interpretation of politics as "a means of conquering others and exercising power over them"² has prompted such penetrating diagnoses as those by Jacques Ellul, for instance, who calls "modern politics the realm of the demonic": we are witnessing the degeneration of a term, "politics," that Machiavelli had not even dared to use.³ Modern politics, by delving into all the dominions of human activity, has "demonized" everything: it has mediatised thought, created an illusory reality, conceived a substitute for salvation, and so on. Satan was able to

¹ From Plotinus.

² See J. Ellul, "La politique moderne lieu du démoniaque," in N. N. Olivetti, ed., *Religione e politica* (Padua: CEDAM, 1978), 101.

³ Ibid.

seduce Adam and Eve by telling them they could become like Gods because divinization is part of the very destiny of Man. The reason that politics has been able to present itself as Man's salvation is that Man does indeed have to attain salvation. It is not enough to exorcise politics; its original meaning also has to be retrieved. You will not become *like* Gods, not because you are the wretched of the Earth, but because you are called to share the very nature of God: you *will be* God. Politics may be demonic, but the devil himself is a fallen angel. Metapolitics sees the angel in the devil, while not denying the reality of the fall.

Our approach will not be theological. The aim is not to exorcise, but to comprehend. It will neither be rationalistic nor abstract.

Recently, it was written that "the more we think about thinking, the less we think about politics."⁴ Certainly, but only if thinking about thinking is reduced to abstract reflectivity, and if thinking is interpreted as calculus that can disconnect itself from reality without impunity, in an idealistic milieu that allows the dichotomy between knowing and doing (theory and praxis).

On the other hand, such a dichotomy is not possible in a contemplative vision of reality in which thinking about thinking is not empty, and one does not think an autonomous thought but has a critical consciousness of an enlightened political activity, that is, of Man who questions his own political activity insofar as it is an activity that springs from his being, which is itself rooted in reality.

Metapolitics is not thinking about political *thought*, but rather thinking about political *activity*, insofar as this activity, by the very fact of being human, is conscious, and as such open to reflection and criticism. We shall not, however, enter here into discussions on political thinking. Our aim is to highlight the roots of human activity that, sunk deep within the soil of human nature, allow it to grow and reach up to heaven. This is the horizon of the metapolitical. The following pages reflect a few rays of its dawn.

Kodakikanal, Christmas 1990

⁴ B. Barber, *The Conquest of Politics: Liberal Theory in Democratic Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 3.

POINTS OF REFERENCE

Prologue

Rather than beginning this discussion with an introductory comment, as is fairly common in the Anglo-Saxon world, since ours is an intercultural path, I would like to begin with a prayer.¹

* * *

The word "prayer" expresses both the sense of *precarious* and the action that spontaneously leads to the entreaty, the plea for help in situations that seem hopeless and overwhelm us. Prayer creates an atmosphere that transcends us and allows us to act freely, even with those who do not share the same ideas; it involves a realization of our limitations, our mistakes and imperfections, due to our precarious situation. It puts us on equal terms with others.

First of all, we ask for wisdom and inspiration. We also ask that we may hear and be heard by others, that we may be able to express ourselves, that we see ourselves as a tiny yet indispensable point in the cosmic unfolding of all reality, to know we are insignificant and yet unique at the same time.

Each one of us is unique in all the universe, and yet we are no more than an imperceptible speck in this universe. A psalm expresses this powerfully: "Turn thee unto me and have mercy on me, for I am unique and poor" (Ps 25:16).²

Uniqueness gives me untransferable dignity and also a responsibility from which there is no escape. Being aware of my poverty, of being just a tiny speck in the universe gives me humility, common sense, and a perspective that makes it impossible to absolutize anything at all, let alone my own ideas. In a certain sense, this awareness of being unique (on which my dignity rests) and poor (which guarantees my freedom) prompts me to ask for mercy, but it also allows me to smile in the midst of the catastrophes and alarming situations of the world today. I choose to hold on to this joy.

Let us try now, together, to create a time and space that are real, new, beneficial, and even enjoyable. This is what sacred time and space are.

This is my prayer and my beginning.

¹ This chapter is a reworked version of my presentation at the Encounter of Political Cultures conference that took place at the Monchanin Intercultural Centre (now the Montreal Intercultural Institute) on August 21, 1983.

² A translation based on the Vulgate version.

Some Aspects of Contemporary Society

We Are Heading the Wrong Way

A personal confession may perhaps set the *Sitz im Leben* of this study and provide the key to its interpretation by explaining its context. Although I began my intellectual life with sciences and political issues linked to religion, my personal life has evolved toward specifically religious and philosophical problems. But for some years now I have become aware that the greatest hopes of humanity, the ultimate questions—which are usually categorized as religious—are all involved in the political field: justice, health, peace, suffering, and so on. And I have immersed myself in the study of political and economical sciences to try to clarify my ideas and live my own religiosity with authenticity. This search has led me to metapolitics.

The word "metapolitics," which has existed in English since the sixteenth century, has generally had three meanings. The first, modeled on the concept of metaphysics, refers to the study of human nature as the foundation of political activity. It has also been named "prepolitics." The second meaning is also related to the word "metaphysics," but in its pejorative sense, and refers to a purely gratuitous and deductive discipline without any foundation in empirical reality. It has also been called "hyperpolitics."³ The third meaning would be a kind of social metaphysics, which has also been named "parapolitics." It is, nevertheless, a concept that has been used very little, although recently some publications and even a magazine (which has just ceased to exist) bear its name. Later on I shall attempt to illustrate the meaning these have given it. For the moment, I am referring to humanity's situation in the present-day world. Studies on political themes are innumerable.

We are faced with an issue of great importance. It could be said that we are becoming increasingly aware of being on the wrong track. We cannot go on living indefinitely in a civilization that is founded on development, or even on growth. Nor can we curb this growth since—in a civilization based on expansion and competition—if growth were to come to a halt, everything would collapse. It is not only about the arms race, but nearly all kinds of races. Human life is not a competition. The world is heading in the wrong direction, and many are conscious of the fact and extremely worried by it. The diagnosis reveals an alarming, growing consensus. In 1934 Simone Weil, troubled by human injustice, wrote, "We are living through a period bereft of a future. Waiting for that which is to come is no longer a matter of hope, but of anguish."⁴ Regarding the therapy that must be applied, however, opinions are more divergent.

My own formulation may appear rather brutal but it is necessary, urgent, in fact, to express oneself clearly on the matter. For too many years now we have been living under the illusion that with a determined effort and goodwill we may succeed in solving the world's problems. Moral behavior may be necessary, yet moralism is not sufficient. As the saying

³ See also the new acceptation given in P. Sloterdijk's stimulating book *Im selben Boot: Versuch über die Hyperpolitik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1993), of which I cannot make a critique here. The author maintains that the paleo-political sphere typical of the millennia-long period of prehistory (too often overlooked) was followed by the politics characteristic of the so-called superior cultures, culminating in the hyperpoliticality of the industrial age: "The world for them [the players of the new game of the industrial era] is an interconnected Hyperglobe. They who belong to the wealthiest class of the actors in this Hyperglobe" (52) need hyperpolitics to understand (or dominate?) the world. We might wonder whether this Hyperglobe will soon burst, or last a much shorter time than the thousands of years of prehistoric communities and the six thousand years of historical polities. One may rather suspect so.

⁴ S. Weil, *Oppression et liberté* (Paris: Gallimard, 1955), 58.

goes, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions." Now we must recognize what was illusory in this attitude. Not only are we aware that resources are limited and that the poor countries are inevitably becoming poorer; the evil goes far deeper. As I have sought to point out elsewhere,⁵ it is acceleration that breaks the rhythms of nature and, therefore, of human nature also. Man has come to believe, with impunity, that acceleration is good (or at least neutral) because four hundred years ago, with the birth of modern science, an extremely special *transfer* was able to take place: the infinity of God was transferred to nature. An infinite nature would not present any problems: growth could be indefinite. Yet contemporary Man knows, by experience, that nature that he manipulates and abuses is not infinite; he has already come up against its limits.

Therefore—I repeat—we are heading the wrong way. The answer does not lie in slowing down the process or launching a program of reforms, but rather in changing our direction, our project. Only a transformation, a radical *metanoia* can get us back on the right track. I do not wish to paint a gloomy picture of contemporary society. I do not consider the people of today to be worse than in the past. I am inclined to think, in fact, that they are better. I would like, however, to speak about the actual global situation of mankind and the dominant political system. And on this subject all I am doing is repeating what the majority of experts tell us about the situation in the world. There is a fundamental difference between our modern age and most other historical periods. While these all went through *crises*, ours is experiencing an actual *mutation*. I have written elsewhere about the "end of history."⁶ To face our situation realistically, we should both return to the origins of the now-dominant technocratic culture and appeal to the wisdom of other traditions.

Here I shall simply outline the former and merely allude to the latter, although my reflections have an intercultural focus.

The Dilemma

We are caught up in a dilemma. On one hand, we have the East, West, North, and South, with their plurality of cultures, radically divergent visions, and totally different situations. On the other hand, there is a global situation that is leading us toward human and planetary catastrophe, due to the growing dominion of the modern technocratic process. There does not appear to be any possibility of "changing tack," altering our course or even slowing down. We feel like drops of water in the ocean. Certainly, there is much talk about the need for change, but it all seems far removed from reality and unrealizable. Should we aim at dismantling the civilization originating from the West, with its economic, military, and technological power? Yet how can we even imagine such a thing when we cannot escape its influence?

We are aware that things are going badly. But are we not all at the root of this malaise, since we are all just cogs in the gigantic technological machine and must keep it working in order to survive, to live? It reminds me of this Oriental proverb: "He who rides a tiger can never dismount"—because the tiger would eat him.

The dilemma is clear: If we keep going in this direction it will bring us to the suicide of mankind and the destruction of the Earth by Man. If we eliminate the System that represents

⁵ R. Panikkar, *Technique et temps: la technochronie*, in E. Castelli, ed., *Tecnica e casistica* (Padua: CEDAM, 1964), 195–229.

⁶ R. Panikkar, "The End of History: The Threefold Structure of Human Time-Consciousness," in M. King, ed., *Teilhard and the Unity of Knowledge* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989). Also in Volume XII of this *Opera Omnia*.

the fabric of life to a large part of mankind it will lead to a catastrophe, similar to that of a drug-addict deprived of his drugs. The current System is leading us toward death, but without it we would also die. The modern technological structure is so firmly anchored to human life that it has become indispensable, if only to provide an answer to the problems it itself has created. Is there any alternative? Can we, or do we wish to, live in a different world, far from technocratic influence?

As I have already mentioned on more than one occasion, there are three possible ways to get out of this quagmire: either through the reformation, the deformation (destruction), or the transformation (metamorphosis) of the dominant system. I would like to show that the first two alternatives are now ineffective, so I shall attempt to present metapolitics as the intuition that could bring about the necessary radical conversion.

The Claim to Universality

To understand what the claim to universality in any given culture represents, it is useful first of all to distinguish, on one hand, between relativism and relativity, and on the other, between culture and cultural practices.

Relativism and Relativity

Relativism leads us nowhere, since it would make it impossible to distinguish between yours and mine, good and bad, gray and green, and so on. It would deprive us of all possibility of communication and dialogue, and leave us without criteria; we would not be able to understand each other, nor even to live together. Not to mention the innate contradiction of relativism: right from the very moment I open my mouth, I contradict my relativism. Relativism, even unformulated, implicit, is not essential to tolerance, benevolence, openness, or pluralism. In my opinion, pluralism has nothing to do with relativism. It is because we do not want to be relativistic, in fact, that we take seriously the fact that if someone says A he is not saying B, that A cannot be B and there is no way to reconcile the two; hence we take each other's ideas seriously and find them to be incompatible with our own. Neither of us are willing to abandon our ideas, or even blend them into a cocktail. The relativism I am criticizing here should not be confused with relativity.

Relativity is an expression of the value of interrelationships between all things. Everything is related to something else. Reality is neither an indistinct, monolithic block nor a scattering of monads without any mutual relationship; being, and even Being, is a verb, and as such an activity, an act, and therefore relational. True, there are relationships that imprison us, and we must break away from every kind of dependence that wounds our freedom and offends our dignity. Such relationships are not constitutive of our person—and yet reality is precisely constitutive solidarity. In current language, "absolute" is the opposite of "relative," which is correct only from a certain point of view. *Ab-solutus* literally means made loose, detached, freed, and therefore complete, perfect, whole, but nowhere is it said that the word means closed, unrelated.

Everything I think, say, ask, and answer is all relative to a context, to a given moment in space and time, to a point of reference in the past, and above all, to an existential relationship that has prompted my thoughts, my questions, and my answers. Because of this, I defend dialects. A dialect is always dialogical, it is always spoken and does not even need to be written down. This is what makes it so great. What "justice" may have meant a few centuries ago is different from what it means today; and yet, though your idea of justice may not be the same as mine, this does not prevent us from understanding each other.

Relativity means that everything I say, I say it to another, who responds, and that together, as we make an effort to understand each other, we create the space in which agreement and disagreement make sense. We are the ones who, in our relationship, create (both from an individual and a cultural and collective point of view) this relativity—which I call radical relativity—that makes it possible for us to affirm, negate, establish our own criteria, and find our bearings in the world without being absolutists or fanatics.

Relativity simply states that there is no object without a subject, and therefore that pure objectivity and subjectivity do not exist. Everything is related. The Trinity expresses the notion of relativity in the very heart of the Godhead. My own metaphysical formulation is very simple. I take the words of Monchanin and apply them to the Trinity: *Esse est coesse. Et coesse est esse ab (a Patre), esse in (in Filio) atque esse ad (ad Spiritum).*⁷

Culture and Cultural Forms

It is important to make a distinction between culture and cultural forms, since cultural forms are used to represent the concrete manifestation and specific interpretation of every culture. A culture that does not allow different specific forms cannot, I believe, truly be considered as such. It would, for example, be a monolithic ideology to consider that people who speak with a different accent than that of the capital city or those who do not repeat the slogans of their party are not accepted in a given culture. Every culture is a culture insofar as it allows different forms of interpretation to coexist within it. We can distinguish between the culture-genus and the culture-species or subcultures, which I have called cultural forms. The inhabitants of Quebec who argue among themselves represent the vitality of that cultural world, which allows different cultural forms to enter into dialogue, mutually fecundate, and even sometimes fight and destroy each other.

Having many different interpretations expressed in different ways is part of the very structure of a culture. Culture provides people with the myth within which they can understand, argue, and contend with each other, in all senses of the word (*polemos* means "war" in Greek).

What is myth? To say that the primordial source of all culture is myth means that myth is the space, the horizon toward which humans look in order to live their own human life. My initial morphological description of myth begins by saying myth is that which one believes in without believing one believes in it. *Cela va sans dire.*⁸ It represents, in fact, the *san dire*, because saying is the *logos*, the spoken word. Myth is that which is not said, and while it is not said, it allows us to say, "It goes without saying," even without saying it is not said; this is myth, culture. This allows human relationship, the very development of the person, and leaves open the space within which everything I say has meaning, which may also be the possibility of being contradicted.

Whichever window we view the world from, it is impossible to see everything; there is no global perspective, no 360-degree perspective. These present-day discussions we hear about a global vision and universality still reveal signs of the syndrome of the thirst for unification that is characteristic of the colonial mentality, which technocracy then inherited.

When we are dealing with politics, this syndrome of universality should be subjected to strict criticism. Certainly, the purpose is not always to prevail over or influence others, including economically; very often there is still a desire not only to convince others but also

⁷ "Being is co-being. And co-being means being-from (from God the Father), being-in (in the Son), being-to (to the Spirit)."

⁸ "It goes without saying."

to acquire knowledge that embraces the whole of human diversity—albeit from our *own* point of view, of course, from our *own* monocultural window. Everything is related. I foresee that the immediate reaction to this will be, "So, where will all this lead us? To chaos, with everyone keeping to their own little corner? What is the criterion of truth? Who will be in control? Where is the proof of this?"

We are constantly seeking a paradigm for the totality of the human being. Yet I would suggest that no one, individually or collectively, holds the vision or control of human experience as a whole, much less of all reality. And this is the consideration on which my defense of pluralism is founded. The ancients were able to put their trust in God, which gave them strength and confidence. We may speculate upon this God, yet without such trust, without such faith in Reality, Man collapses—beginning with his thinking, which has to be based on something.

Putting it politically and polemically, we might ask: What is the value, even from a simply logical viewpoint, of the self-proclamation of a people as sovereign? To whom are they declaring their superiority over everything? To themselves?

My philosophical effort tends toward the decentralization of thought. And my theory (though this is not the place to defend it) is that truth, by its very nature, is pluralist. This does not mean, of course, that it can be reduced to absolute relativism or subjectivism. The fact that truth is pluralist does not mean that it is plural.⁹ In my opinion, from a historical viewpoint the ideal of many religions, and likewise their vision of the world, does not lean toward universality, as is generally believed in the modern world.

The Impossibility of Universal Questions

On the subject of universal questions, there is a well-known phrase by St. Augustine that describes, through a clearcut formula, the birth of Western Man. The phrase, which is often incorrectly translated, says, *Quaestio mihi factus sum*. I offer three versions with subtle differences: "I have made a problem of myself"; "I have become a problem to myself"; and "I have turned myself into a problem for myself." This is extraordinary: I am myself the problem; I am aware, in this critical reflection, that the problem is not the world, it is not God, but it is I myself. I realize that I become a problem to myself. Let us remember that it was St. Augustine himself who, centuries before Descartes (albeit from a different perspective), coined the formula, *Si fallor, ergo sum* (Even if I am wrong [about myself], I [nonetheless] am).

This realization corresponds, in my opinion, to the birth of Western Man: it is what constitutes his greatness and perhaps also his weakness, because the question may have no answer, nor is it an innocent question. It implies in itself a certain individualism, a certain concept of personality and a human elitism in relation to the cosmos and reality as a whole—all of which are characteristics typical of the West. To Western Man this question represents, perhaps, the loss of innocence. He cannot live in this world without being on the defensive; his personality is threatened by doubts and by others, that is, by the outer world. There are ethnic groups, civilizations, and human types for whom these "fundamental" questions do not even arise. It seems to me, therefore, that we should recognize the fact that the *concept* of universality is not universal.

⁹ R. Panikkar, "Religious Pluralism: The Metaphysical Challenge," *Religious Pluralism* 5 (1994): 97–115; "The Pluralism of Truth," *World Faiths Insight* 26 (October 1990): 7–16. In Volume VI, Part 1 of this *Opera Omnia*.

If we affirm that universal questions exist not as an axiom a priori but rather as an induction a posteriori, "because everyone says so," then I must ask, Who is everyone? All of us here, but what about the others? What about the Jews, the poor, the people who are indifferent to these type of problems, and what about "cavemen"? "Man," after all, is not only contemporary Man. A priori, one imagines, perhaps hopes, that everyone asks the same questions. But if, following Kant's logic, you say you cannot give an answer a posteriori since it is from the perspective of the very constitution of the human being, or of reason, that the questions are universal, I will reply inductively that, until we are all here together, this answer has no basis, because it is already taking for granted a specific view of the human intellect. And this leads me to wonder whether universality may exist from the point of view of questions, and to conclude that perhaps it is not possible in this perspective either, since we do not know the questions all human beings ask themselves.

In fact, although it is true that we are all human beings and it is our nature to ask questions, it is also true that the questions we are asking are not the same for everyone. Some ask: Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going? Others ask: Why is there suffering? Why is there death? And yet others ask: What is reality? Each question is born from a particular context, which is not universal.

At the same time, any question implies a certain number of possible answers for which the question makes sense. If you ask me, "What is God?"—a question that is apparently universal and which I refuse to answer—you will say, "I asked you a concrete and fundamental question, to which you have no answer." You have already preestablished the plane I would have to place myself on in order to answer your question. The question conditions the answer. Every question allows for a certain number of answers, and also sets their limits. There are no neutral questions; of all those asked above, none can be considered universal.

There is a certain phrase by Martin Heidegger that repeatedly appears in his work: "Die Leidenschaft des Wissens ist das Fragen" (The passion for knowledge lies in asking), and also the well-known "Das Fragen ist die Frömmigkeit des Denkens" (Asking is the piety of thought). To ask questions is an act of piety in the most profound sense of the word *pietas*. It is the very religiosity of thought. A thought that is able to ask a question is a true thought. I agree with this. What I do not agree with is the kind of universalization that claims that the *same* questions are asked all over the world. I do not believe this is exactly true, and the corollary I draw is that if the *same* questions were asked everywhere and produced widely different answers, this would mean that of all the traditions in the world, those that gave an answer that we did not consider to be satisfactory would be false. And this, in fact, has happened many times throughout the history of religions. I defend pluralism not because the answers vary, but rather because the questions are mutually incommensurable, since each individual is not an "answerer" to given questions, but rather an "asker."

There is no such thing as a repertoire or holder of questions. Man is a being whose self-understanding is part of his very nature. The different answers to a given question can be analyzed and criticized. They may be false, incoherent, variously incomplete, complementary, true, and so on. They are different, but not more nor less equivalent, since the ontological status of the questions is different. Questions arise from a magma, from an accepted myth, I would say, that it is existentially conferred and visible only through the variously implicit answer to the question asked. We do not have the same criteria for criticizing the questions that human beings sincerely and spontaneously ask themselves—unless, that is, we believe we have a monopoly over humanity or even rationality. Again, I defend pluralism. We must bear in mind, moreover, that we often ask questions (which are themselves questions of our culture) because we discern the range of possible answers and want to know for sure which is the right one.

I am wary of the tendency to universalize. Not only to universalize questions—I also distrust the universality of Man's reflective questioning. It is true that at the heart of a certain kind of myth, a certain kind of history, there are questions that are asked in a universal way, but they only appear as such in a specific context. This is what I call myth. The myth of the Abrahamic tradition asks the very serious question "What is God?" In the Buddhist world, however, this question, qua question, does not even exist. Methodologically speaking, it would be inappropriate to give an answer to a question that has not been asked.

In any opinion and any statement there is a certain claim to validity. If I say, "You Christians," "We Hindus," and so on, I am claiming the truth and validity of the statement, otherwise it would make no sense. Yet claiming validity or truth is not the same as claiming universality. It is important to make this distinction.

Within a specific horizon, in which I see both the validity of the answer and the legitimacy of the question, it is clearly possible to universalize the answer. Note, however, the metaphor in the word "horizon": "We each have our own horizon," yet as I change, my horizon also changes, though I am not directly aware of it. In a certain sense, the horizon is the place of the universalizable, otherwise it would not be a horizon. The horizon is invisible, and it is what allows me to see, to regulate my vision. Subsequently, I may be able to experience that my horizon (which I consider to be universal because I cannot see any other) is in fact not universal. From the top of a mountain my view of the landscape is different from the view I have in the valley. Moving has changed my horizon. Each case, nevertheless, claims to be valid and true.

Generally, it is the other who, in a clear way, helps me to realize that my horizon is not the only one and, therefore, not universal. Here we come to the intercultural field. From the viewpoint of the history of cultures and religious sciences, a claim to the truth is not the same as a claim to universality. The latter belongs to a certain *forma mentis*, powerful, certainly, but not universal. Even if there were a logical horizon, which is not a private horizon (to Kant this [logical] horizon corresponds to the logic of the horizon as we think of it, that is to say, the horizon built on the basis of the necessary conditions for any possible understanding according to our conception), this horizon should not be confused with the *idea* of logical horizon—that which allows Man to think. There is no assurance that it is unchangeable and given once and for all.

The truth can be claimed, and validity can be claimed; I might also intend to persuade you of that which I myself am convinced. Yet this is not enough to start a crusade. And another thing: even accepting that my discourse lays claim to (hypothetical) universality, I would in any case be referring to a structure of discourse that has lasted for six thousand years. Yet I would never dream of applying this universality (toward which, to a certain extent, my schema tends) to the whole of reality. Reality is infinitely greater than my understanding, and even than the highest state of understanding—that of the spirit, as Laplace viewed it, of the divine intellect, of Hegel's absolute reflection, of Aristotle's *noēsis noēsōs*,¹⁰ and of all the monotheistic conceptions of the Supreme Being.

Logos and Universality

The idea of universality can become an ideology in the worst sense of the word; this would be the totalization of a partial experience. It is true that, when Man is reduced to *logos*, even in its most profound meaning, he cannot do without this universality. But, speaking

¹⁰ "A thinking of thinking."

in Christian terms, there is also the Spirit, which cannot be either reduced to or added to the *logos*: it is trusted *without reserve*. I would like to insist on this idea that being cannot be reduced to intelligibility. I believe that in human life not everything can be reduced to an intelligible schema ("intelligible" not to me, a poor mortal, but in itself). Human conviviality is not based on pure reason, nor is it the result of a perfect rational plan. We have all experienced the certainty that the purest and even most spiritual human joy is not solely the fruit of the intellect.

I am opposed to the dominion of *logos* in some cultures (a characteristic found not only in Western culture but in others also). If I were to attempt a sort of morphology of cultures, I would say that cultures that tend to identify the human being with *logos* (and I do not mean rationalism) are leaning toward universalization: if Man's essence is his rationality, and if reason is one, then all rational truth must be universal. There are other cultures, however, in which *logos* does not represent the whole of Man's essence, and these cultures do not feel the need to universalize.

At a purely epistemological level, I would say the following: all knowledge is claimed to be true; we claim that what we know is what we have declared that we know. Now, if a truth is to be universalized it must be considered as being purely objective, that is, as a truth that is independent from our subjectivity; we have to disassociate it from ourselves as subjects of knowledge. Therefore, this pure objectivity would be the relationship with an absolute subjectivity, with divine knowledge. If we dispute that $2 + 2 = 4$ everywhere, and is therefore a universal truth, we could easily argue that $2 + 2 = 4$ only when it is an absolute tautology and therefore it makes no affirmation about any reality whatsoever. Two cows and two friendships do not add up to four—unless the abstraction is total and "cow" and "friendship" have no meaning at all.

Religions and Universality

Christianity, Buddhism, and (especially) Islam are three religions that claim universality. Hinduism does not make this claim, nor, as far as I know, do most African religions. Trust in Reality, however, is common to all religions.

Buddhism also shows a tendency to proselytize and to seek followers, but unlike Islam and Christianity (whether this is true or merely a parody), it does not condemn other religions by claiming it has the one and only truth—although it often claims to have the supreme truth.

Moreover, proselytism can be engaged in without falling into absolutism. We may wish to share something good, to help our neighbour or to try and convince others that what we believe in is true. This does not mean we are convinced we have the absolute truth.

The monotheistic belief tends to consider all things from an absolute point of view, although there is a marked difference between the absolute knowledge of God and the way I partake of this knowledge. We must not forget that most of the abuses in religious circles have been committed in the name of this kind of faith.

In contrast, let us take the example of Hinduism, which presents two fundamental aspects that do not follow along this line. The notion of *svadharma*, the personalized (by which I do not mean individualized) *dharma*, adapted to each human being, is a notion that does not allow for any kind of universalization. This is related to the traditional concept of castes, which would be abhorrent if it were not based on *svadharma*. Here there is a denial of a certain form of universalization: that which is good for you, your personal *dharma*, is so incompatible with mine that I, Arjuna, must fight you to the death. But you, for your part, must also follow your *svadharma*. I refer here, obviously, to the *Bhagavad-gita*.

Another important element in Hinduism is its existential conception. Why is it that traditional Hinduism has never sought to convert others? Why are others not allowed to be converted to this *dharma*? If Hinduism is the path to salvation par excellence, surely, we may think, it would be a good thing if others, that is, the *mlecchas* (non-Aryans, "barbarians," foreigners, etc.), could also embrace *sandhana-dharma*? No, these cannot be converted to Hinduism (I am not talking about neo-Hinduism, which I respect, because a religion can evolve). In traditional Hinduism there is no room for conversion in the sense it is understood in the Abrahamic religions. We cannot, simply by following ideas, become what we are not. We can, of course, be convinced, but is not Man much more than the sum of his convictions? It is impossible, then, to universalize. We can instruct others in the mental order, we can convince them of the value of Hindu ideas, but they cannot be converted. They belong in another place, which is a secondary place, but it is not interchangeable. There is no sense of universality, of something that suits everyone. In the West do we not often hear about, and admire, *gurus* who have no wish to convert their Western disciples to Hinduism, but rather to help them be better Christians?

Another example is the Chinese religion, which (in simple terms) has no wish to be universal; it considers itself, in fact, to be superior. The Chinese were the first to call others "barbarians." But here we are touching on another series of problems.

The last paradigm of this way of thinking that gives absolute priority to oneness is philosophical monism or monotheism, according to which, in the final analysis, there exists one single self-comprehending Reality that is pure intelligibility in that it is simply Oneness. In defending pluralism I am challenging the need for the total intelligibility of reality, even in itself. We must be prepared to abandon monotheism, that is, belief in a completely self-intelligible Absolute Being.

In the case of the Christian religion, the Trinity is not monotheism—though neither is it polytheism nor, obviously, tritheism. The Christian theology of the future should focus on a reflection on the Trinity and break away from its monotheistic interpretation. This implies recognizing that Reality is not intelligible, either in itself or comprehensively, which means no more Hegel, nor Aristotle, nor Thomas Aquinas, nor monotheism!

To speak of oneness is to speak of one fundamental thing: the ultimate constitution of reality. To the statement that oneness is the tendency toward unification, I would reply that one could permanently live in a state of provisional unification, in the sense, for example, of, "I know nothing about it, but Allah knows." And this is certainly comforting. I am not saying that if I am a monotheist I must necessarily be a fanatic; in this case, in fact, it is not that I know everything, but I believe there is a God who does. Yet if our approach is truly multicultural we must also put these ultimate considerations on the table of discussion. This attitude is dangerous and revolutionary, as it touches the very core of that on which a whole civilization has been founded.

Three Cultural Traps

To illustrate more clearly this claim to universality that we have outlined, and also to help introduce the next chapter, we now analyze three cultural traps of modern-day society: folklore tolerance, linguistic imperialism, and the technocratic empire.

Folklore Tolerance

Today the seriousness of the situation is sometimes hidden behind an apparent openness to other cultures and their contribution to improving the System, and there is a certain

complacency in talking about the cultural tolerance of modern civilization. Now, so-called capitalist liberalism, the highest representative of the modern mentality, allows us certain individual freedoms and tolerates a degree of cultural plurality, but only on condition that we respect its underlying myth, that is, the rules of its ideology in a social-political-economic context. As long as this ideology continues to be a myth, and therefore unchallenged, believed, individuals can find fulfillment. But human reality is neither homogeneous nor monocultural.

What, then, is the relationship between the modern political order, born of one single culture, and the plurality of cultures that are referred to with affection but too often tend to be reduced to folklore? We hear often such grand terms as tolerance, plurality, and multicultural society, but what is usually meant (and this in itself is progress) is the fact of giving people the freedom to speak their own languages at home, to dress in traditional costume, dance their dances and practice their familiar customs, on condition, of course, that they respect the rules of the game of that which is referred to, in the singular, as "civilization." They are allowed total freedom as long as they do not interfere with the established order, as long as they respect and conform to it without protest. The political sphere is placed above that of culture, and certainly above that of religion.

Public order provides a well-defined framework within which all cultural activities can find a place and subcultures can develop. Even religions are subject to politics. In the Republic of India, for example, the term "secular State" has not the same meaning as the French *état laïc*; it refers to a public order that is higher than the religious system, respectful of all the religions of the subcontinent and an indispensable condition for maintaining order and peace. In theory, it is the "secular State" that guarantees the religious freedom of Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and followers of other religions, although in practice the religious sphere often dominates and conditions politics—a little like the many Indian women who lay down the strict conditions of possibility based on which the men of the family are able to make decisions.

Although the Constitution of the Republic describes India as a "secular State," the religious disturbances between Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs have not ceased to proliferate over the past forty years. To say that the Hindu majority should respect religious minorities does not reassure the latter, and certainly not a "minority" comprising almost a hundred million Muslims. The sociological characteristics of minorities cannot be perceived on this scale. A secular State can only satisfy those for whom political secularity becomes, as in the West, the new religion. A new formula has to be found if we want to avoid one religion being dominated by another.

In short, we can be free on condition, of course, that we pay for our freedom, preferably in dollars. And the price to pay is a compromise that, in the end, will kill these cultures. Any interest shown in them is often superficial because, in actual fact, they can only survive in a state of cultural servitude.

I recognize that, in a sense, we are more and more comfortable as we free ourselves of the junk of many of our monolithic formulas. We have to admit also that the institutionalization of the religious world has caused great distress both in the past and the present. But is it sufficient to keep politics separate from religiosity? Can we be content with granting limited autonomy to local cultures as long as they do not question the "universal order" that is offered to us or imposed upon us?

The political system on which modern States are based is the cornerstone of human life. We take for granted, for example, that the current monetary system, whether individual or collective, is a universal system. Gift or reciprocity economies are considered to be "primitive," underdeveloped stages, and in this way we defend a "free" market economy that justifies

what Dominique Temple called "economicide."¹¹ Likewise, the institution of the nation-State is considered a taboo that cannot be broken.¹² All this has been extensively studied today.

I would like now to present another example that is certainly well known but often overlooked.

Linguistic Imperialism

One simple fact is enough to illustrate what I mean. Every year over a hundred different languages disappear, and many of them barely leave any trace. Of course, in theory, there are still over five thousand languages that we can speak, but we are told it would be impossible to understand each other even if we knew them all. We also know that most human languages are basically ignored in political and international relations. The United Nations have adopted five official languages. Even though these contribute to mutual understanding they also set a limit, and what we cannot say with five languages could not be said with one *lingua universalis* either. What I am questioning is the widespread belief that it would be a good thing if we could all communicate with each other, adopting the ideal upheld by the builders of the unfortunate tower of Babel.

I would like to point out that one of the most limiting aspects of cultural monomorphism is the imperialism of languages. The distinction between a language and a dialect places the latter in danger of extinction, because it originates from a dominant position. To sum up the central aspect of this phenomenon in a few words: the Florentine dialect became Italian because of the economic power behind it; Parisian became French thanks to the petitions of the French Academy; and English, which was no more than a dialect, was made a language by the Royal Navy. I have a deep respect and admiration for Dante, the city of Paris, and Shakespeare, but it took a more assertive power, a political power, for these dialects to become the languages we know. How many of us, in fact, are familiar with the poetry of Catalanian poet Maragall or Georgian poet Tabidzé, though it is no less valuable than that recognized by so-called universal literature?

The case of Antonio de Nebrija in the sixteenth century, the first European grammarian, is paradigmatic. He created the Castilian grammar to unify the various dialects of the language of Spain and place it at the service of the rising Spanish Empire. A legal code requires a homogeneous language. But what is the use of this unification? It is needed to strengthen the State—and yet this is exactly what we should be questioning: is a great State or a strong Market really necessary for the fullness of human life? For information we need recognized signs, for communication we need a known tongue, and for communion we need a language that is shared and in part created by those who speak it. All the richest words, those that convey more than just plain information, are found in dialects. They spring from a common stratum, from the same soil. There is no word without its soil. All *real* words (I do not refer to technical terms) have value, flavor, and strength in the context in which they were forged—dialogue, and consequently in the form of dialectics.

A distinction must be made between words and terms. *Words* are symbols adopted by a linguistic group; they are the crystallization of a communitarian experience. They are polysemous and ambivalent. *Terms* are signs; they are contrivances that define objects experienced

¹¹ See D. Temple, "L'économicide," *Interculture* 98 (1988): 10–48.

¹² See A. Nandy, "La culture, l'État et la redécouverte d'une politique indienne," *Interculture* 99 (1988): 2–19, for an examination of the actual situation in India from this viewpoint.

sensorially or measured conceptually or experimentally. They are univocal and arbitrary.¹³ Even the academic caste, one of the great castes in the West, speaks its own jargon. Most French or English speakers only understand a part of their respective languages. An American from Harvard may well find it difficult to be understood in South London, or even in South Boston. One has to be initiated to be able to understand! The tragedy of African languages, even under English- or French-speaking governments, is well known. The *true* natives do not count. Let us not forget that only 10 percent of the world's population speak English well enough that they are able to use it in a creative activity. The general opinion, in any case, is that those who do not speak one of these major languages are considered to be underdeveloped. There exists a certain latent linguistic imperialism (more or less tacitly accepted by the majority) that must be unmasked. I might mention the silent battle between English and Hindi in some States of the Indian Union, where even those who defend the "national language" send their children to English Medium Schools to guarantee their family "future."

The case of language is equally enlightening for the fact that it represents the paradigm of the present-day situation: anonymity. The dominance of English is not that of England or the United States. India publishes more books in English than Australia and New Zealand together, and even more than Canada. Spanish is not Spain, and French also has its defenders, writers, and poets in Africa. The System is faceless. It represents neither the West nor the "white race." The metastasis is total.

It is not a question of fighting against a country, a language, or an empire. The ideology is now everywhere. The world has an army of almost thirty million people, all cast from the same mold, so to speak. And the army of politicians (i.e., the bureaucrats of politics) is even vaster. As has been clear ever since the 1930s, we are ruled by bureaucracy, which controls everything: the State, the trade unions, industry, capitalism, and the scientific world. Yet today all these forms of bureaucracy are under the aegis of technocracy. This is technocentrism. How, then, can we speak of pluralism?

The Technocratic Empire

The empire today is technocracy.¹⁴ The idea of *one* God, *one* Church, and *one* Empire has been replaced by that of *one* Civilization and, currently, of *one* single economic Market, which I call the "scientific-technocratic complex." This, as I have already pointed out, is the immediate successor to the Empire in its approach of claiming universality. To use a subtler and more dangerous corollary, we could say that the political conquest (the period of colonialism) has been replaced by the economic conquest, which still dominates the world today. However, the syndrome of universal conquest also includes that of thought (i.e., totalitarian propaganda). The intellectual violence that is hidden in modern propaganda must be unmasked. I am very wary of any kind of project of universalization that uses thought to conquer what it once sought to overcome with weapons, and that today it still seeks to conquer through the economy. Elsewhere I have spoken of the violence of reason and of modern dialectic reason as a weapon.¹⁵ Reason also must be disarmed.

¹³ R. Panikkar, "Words and Terms," in M. M. Olivetti, ed., *Esistenza, Mito, Ermeneutica* (Padua: CEDAM, 1980), 117–33. In Volume IX, Part 2 of this *Opera Omnia*.

¹⁴ See R. Panikkar, *La nova innocéncia* (Barcelona, 1991), 111–27.

¹⁵ See R. Panikkar, "La torre di Babele: pace e pluralismo," in *Cultura della Pace* (San Domenico di Fiesole [FI]), 1990); and "La dialectique de la raison armée," an interview published in *Concordia* 12 (1988): 81–96.

I would like to add one more thing here: from the point of view of technocracy, it is not so tragic for a large part of the workers to lose their jobs. The System is rich enough to provide for their needs or assist them through the Welfare State. For the workers, on the other hand, it is worrying, since they no longer have the satisfaction either of producing or of receiving their hard-earned salary. They are a burden to the State. Another equally serious aspect is the fact that, by transforming creative, fruitful human activity into paid, mechanized, and often demeaning work, they have been "marginalized," a new kind of unemployed workers. They do not die of hunger, but of boredom. What is perverse is this idea of work reduced to technocratic efficiency. A distinction must be made between the job and work. The former is alienating, the latter is creative.

The System can manage without the activity of all its unemployed, and it can also feed them because it exploits the earth, thereby staking a claim on the future. In providing for the needs of the unemployed it is hastening, we might say, the end of the world. This is the perversion of natural rhythms.

Summing up, we could say that in our present-day situation the political dimension seems to have acquired supremacy over everything, since the State is its most visible symbol. This supremacy is identified with the dominion of a specific political ideology: that of the technocratic complex, an ideology that is nefarious for all other cultures that have a different conception of reality and, therefore, of the political world.

While the specific supremacy of politics over contemporary life must be opposed, we also have to recognize that the human being is essentially *homo politicus*. Nevertheless, politics cannot be reduced to its economic aspect, or even its sociological character, in the contemporary meaning of the word. And here we come to the very crux of the matter.

THE POLITICAL FIELD

The above considerations, condensed and multifarious as they are, seemed to me to be an appropriate way to focus on the issue and provide a background for what follows.

The Absorption of Politics into the State

Politics may be defined as "the set of principles, symbols, means, and actions through which Man aspires to the common good of the *polis*."¹ I prefer to use this broad definition because far too often politics is limited to that which concerns a country's government. The field of politics is much vaster.

The political field is the human dimension that makes political activity a fully human activity—in other words, the conceptual field of Man's political activity.

Politics is a praxis that is based on a theory, and this theory is political science. We should note that in everyday language the distinction between politics and the political field still remains extremely vague.

But before we examine these ideas we must first reflect on the situation today.

An intercultural approach enables us to show how the current idea of politics, which limits itself to dealing with the problems presented by the modern State, leads us to a dead-end. Every nation has its own culture. Culture embraces a whole group of elements that are all closely linked: language, food, clothing, customs, religions, art, lifestyle, and "bioregion." In short, it is a unifying myth. Each culture embodies a unique conception of the world and of life—with, of course, a series of differences of varying degrees of importance. Each one represents a species of mankind. And, in turn, each country has its own cultural specificity; it is a species, a cultural species of the human genus, the genus "culture." The modern State, on the other hand, is not a genus. It presents itself as a particular case of a unique species: the State. Its specificity lies in its individuality. The modern concept of State is monocultural. We cannot deny its Western origins, or the fact that its structure was based on the ideas of the Enlightenment.

Today we have reached a level of remarkable homogeneity: one single technocracy, an administration with identical procedures in all branches of public bureaucracy, an organization that is called "rational," that is, modern. The State, by its very nature, cannot be multicultural. It must be based on a structure that is the same everywhere—this is what I call the technocratic complex. All air traffic control towers at airports worldwide must give and take orders in a single linguistic code. The economy of modern States can be neither pluralistic nor intercultural; the monetary market does not allow it. States only continue to coin their national currency out of pure historical inertia.

¹ See R. Panikkar, "Religion ou politique?" in M. M. Olivetti, ed., *Religione e politica* (Padua: CEDAM, 1978), 73–82.

On the other hand, nations can preserve their languages and their vision of the universe. Each country is a microcosm; it makes up a nonisolated whole, since it is connected with other countries with no other rules, in this context, than those established at the time of belligerent or peaceful encounters.

The political constellation of today's world gives us a striking example: Europe is made up of States that bring together a certain number of (stateless) nations subjected to or in rebellion against these States; but the latter, for their part, seek to unite in a European Union guided by economic pragmatism while sharing, at the same time, a historic destiny. The recent events in the former USSR and former Yugoslavia show us, in all its crudeness, the strength of *nations* compared to the *State*. Asia is saturated with language, cultural, and religious groups that should also be called nations, but are aggregated in States that are to varying degrees stable, and artificially created. India is an example of this. Instead of entering into all the Asiatic complexities of Bangladesh or Punjab, however, let us take a simpler example—that of Catalonia. Here is a country that aspires to true autonomy, and also greater independence. This is its right—the right of all populations. Yet (and here lies the paradox) on becoming States, populations sacrifice their independence as nations. They are forced to be "modernized" on the basis of a single model, and so we have modern colonialism. Nations become victims of their own States. Gandhi disapproved of the formation of a stable, institutionalized army, but today India, as a State, cannot manage without an army. Africa is made up of tribes that have been aggregated in States that, ironically, have been called "independent." Nations (or tribes, in this case) lose their identity and their independence *precisely* by becoming States—a reversal that often has tragic consequences. These theoretical considerations are directly born of the order of *praxis*.

I believe it is important to emphasize the concept of latent individualism in the modern idea of State. *The current sovereign State corresponds to the individual to which the human being has been reduced.* The State is the collective individual. Democracy procedures conform to the State. States behave as collective sovereign individuals. We do not need much imagination to realize that this does not correspond to reality. It appears more like a sinister comedy or farce. It includes the veto power of the five member-states of the United Nations, "bloc party" politics, and so on. Panama has not the same weight as the United States: the facts speak widely for themselves.²

Ironically, language still speaks of sovereign States, that is, those that are *superani*, superior or higher, since there can be no greater power. One can understand the *raison d'être* of the monarch, the highest member of the community, because he represents the community and receives his authority from God. A sovereign State is synonymous with a monarchic State. One can also understand why modern grammarians have insisted that the word "State" be written with a capital S: the sovereign and supreme State, above all, ruling over all. What kind of relationship can there be between sovereigns if they are unwilling to give up their sovereignty "voluntarily"? And they certainly will not do so if there is no advantage to be gained from it. But if they do forsake their sovereignty, they will no longer rule as sovereigns. This is pragmatism to the utmost degree. The highest instance is now no longer that of the sovereign but that of *Realpolitik*, which is able to make concessions that will then be revoked once they prove to be of no use to the State with the greatest power, since it can afford to promote its own interests as absolutely supreme. And here we are at the *bellum omnium contra omnes*, the "war of all against all." How far we have come from Scipio! As Cicero reminds

² Referring to the United States' invasion of Panama in December 1989, during the presidency of George H. W. Bush.

us, *Sine summa iustitia rem publicam geri nullo modo posse* (Without the strictest justice it is not at all possible to administer public affairs).

While the State is a collective individual, *the idea of nation corresponds to the traditional idea of person*. Nations are persons, in that they represent interdependent relationships. The idea of one single nation would be as contradictory as that of one single person. Here we are faced with one of the syndromes of modern thought: the obsession for quantification. However, neither the person nor the nation is quantifiable: they cannot be either singular or plural. The person is neither one nor multiple, but a knot in a network of relationships. There are no knots without relationships, nor relationships without knots. The same applies to the nation as collective person. No nation can be sovereign, as the notion of sovereignty is not applicable here. Every nation is unique; it has no substitute. Its dignity resides in the uniqueness of its relationships with everyone. This is the regime of pluralism. On the other hand, the State (as an individual) is not characterized by its relationships with others, but by the fact that it is *indivisus*, indivisible, unshareable: it is sovereign. We are dealing here with two different schemas.

I now would like to stress the importance of ideas. The birth of the consciousness of the individual and that of the State are not unrelated. The effort of Marxists to absorb the individual into a collective is no more convincing than "liberal" individualism. Man's political dimension pertains to anthropology. I have tried elsewhere³ to outline an anthropology that embraces the political dimension as constitutive to Man. Despite the principle of subsidiarity, also advocated by Pope Pius XI,⁴ which affirms that the State should only provide for the needs of its citizens and organize what other communities cannot (e.g., guarantee the defense of the nation), today the State is increasingly becoming the "manager" of science, industry, and even culture (including time⁵), thus turning the natural order of things upside down. The reason for this is very simple, and also relates to our problem: the *monetization* of culture.

The main character of modernity is the monetary price that is placed on every human activity. Nowadays most activities, including artistic, scientific, and industrial, could not be realized without money. The State has taken on the role of depositary and sole guarantor of money, despite the disapproval of banks and multinational companies. And consequently, it is the latter that, in turn, become the great "patrons" of culture, the arts, and scientific research. It is worth pointing out here that the classic State of the nineteenth century was composed of five ministries: war, foreign affairs, internal affairs, justice, and finance. Today the State intervenes in such fields as agriculture, energy, transport, sports, information, tourism, environment, culture, health, and even the intellectual sphere. Out of spiritual inertia these are still called "ministries," but they should be known as "magisteries."

The consequence of this State control over almost all human activity is twofold. On the one hand, the State directs almost everything by means of the canalization of monetary contributions from various sources. The economy practically monopolizes everything. On the other, the State interferes in the field of culture to such an extent that any activity of a cultural nature that escapes its control is perceived as a threat to its monolithic organization.

³ *Der Weisheit eine Wohnung bereiten* (Munich: Kösel, 1991), 41–86; "Der Mensch, ein trinitarisches Mysterium," in *Die Verantwortung des Menschen für eine bewohnbare Welt in Christentum, Hinduismus und Buddhismus* (Freiburg: Herder, 1985), 147–99. In Volume VIII of this *Opera Omnia*.

⁴ *Quadragesimo anno* (1931), no. 79.

⁵ See the interesting study by D. Gross, "Temporality and the Modern State," *Theory and Society* 14 (1985): 53–82, showing how the modern State dominates individuals through the subtle imposition of its own chronology.

This situation, which reaches its paroxysm in totalitarian States, is the cause of a great many tragedies. Even in so-called liberal States, meanwhile, it is not possible to practice, for example, alternative medicine, since the hospitals accessible to most people are managed by the State, or to build a house in the way we choose, or found a society without the State's approval of the statutes. In medieval Europe, up until the sixteenth century, it was unthinkable for the *vita socialis* of corporations or even the *conversatio civilis* of institutions to be supported, much less controlled, by the State.

Yet let us take our analysis further. By reducing the political sphere to the State, relations among States being what they are, politics becomes exclusively the means by which power is gained or held onto. Carl Schmitt is right: politics has been reduced to the friend-enemy dialectic. Thus it becomes the manner in which the human animal regulates his dealings with other groups—hence the logical consequence expressed in the famous phrase by Clausewitz, according to which war is no more than the continuation of politics through other (more violent and decisive) means. This brings us to social Darwinism and the “survival of the fittest,” by which politics would be reduced to the law of the jungle.

I would like, however, to approach the issue by beginning with an analysis of the present-day situation that Western culture has produced. Let us first look back at history.

The History of the Word

Presenting a picture of the current situation will be a historical tour de force. It would be far easier to hold a course on Roman or Mongolian history, talk about Asoka, or expound the polities of Akbar than to condense fifty centuries of history in just a few pages. We shall put our trust in the symbolic strength of names and seek to shed some light on the object of our study by going back to the source of the word.

Through language, we find ourselves on a path that Man long before us has traveled. Words are testimonies of human experience and reveal to us what our ancestors thought, felt, and discovered. This word we use—“politics”—has undergone numerous changes throughout the course of its history.

Let us begin with Greece. Perhaps we should have begun with Mesopotamia or Egypt, but to remain within the cultural context of our language we limit ourselves to semantics and follow the thread of the word “politics.” I only briefly mention two Sanskrit words: *pur* (city) and *praram* (fortified city or citadel, in the sense of fortress).

The (Greek) Polis

As we know, *ἡ πολιτική* is a Greek word that, even before Plato and Aristotle, was already distinct from the base form *πόλις*, city. Note that *polis* always means city and sometimes State, but only indirectly. The verb *πολίζω*, which appears as far back as in Homer (*Iliad* VII.453; XX.217) means to build the walls of the city, following the etymology of *polis*.

Let us take a look at what the classical Greek city was. The *polis* was regarded as a microcosm, a miniature world in which a human moved toward his realization as he became converted into (another) microcosm. Man and the city symbolized the cosmos, the whole reality. We should not forget that the microcosm, the city (intermediary between the personal cosmos and the macrocosm), also had its Gods and spirits. *Res publica magna et vere publica quae dii atque homines continentur*, writes Seneca (One vast and truly “public,” which contains alike Gods and men [*De otio*, IV.1]). Man is a citizen, and those who are not (i.e., slaves) do not attain human plenitude. In short, the city is not only a sociological fact, but also a theological reality, and forms an integral part of a cosmology.

We must not forget that we are dealing with ancient times, when the poisonous DDT of "scientific reason" had not yet eliminated a large number of living beings from the universe. According to Buddhism, there are six classes of citizens in the cosmos: Gods (*devas*), semigods (*asuras*), human beings, animals, "hungry ghosts" (*pretas*), and the condemned. Man is just one group of inhabitants in the cosmos; and, importantly, there are no "saved." *Nirvāna* is beyond everything, pure transcendence. For this reason, the "saved" are saved from existence and from being. They *are* no more.

But let us return to our subject. Although there had been antecedents, the *polis* was the great revolution of the Mediterranean world. And I believe that the vision that gave rise to this revolution could be, in our times, a source of inspiration for a new approach to the political phenomenon. The great Greek revolution (posterior to the civilizations of Mesopotamia and the great Asian and Persian Empires), which came after the Egyptian civilization, did not consist in establishing another (let us say more democratic) empire, but rather in conceiving human life as a "political" question and not as an imperial destiny—despite the temptation of power to which, later on, Rome was to succumb. The Greek conception was based on a new anthropology, an anthropic—and not only cosmic—vision of Man. It recognized the *right* for other cities to exist, which goes much further than just accepting the *fact* of tolerating them. The other city was accepted because Man was accepted, and Man is *polis*. It is worth citing here the famous phrase by Aristotle that says that a man who lives outside the *polis* is an animal or a semigod. The preceding empires only accepted other empires because they existed. They had to be conquered because, on principle, there could only be *one* supreme power, *one* sovereign. According to the idea of empire, which is more cosmic than anthropological, the individual is merely subservient to the imperial destiny. The city, on the other hand is anthropomorphic, so it was possible to have a confederation of cities.

I have a suspicion that comes from that neglected discipline, the geography of religions.⁶ The great empires were land-based empires. Greece is almost an archipelago. The influence of the sea is of a completely different order to that of the land. Boats are more fragile than bridges, and sea currents more dangerous than land routes. The language of water is not that of the earth. The union of seafaring peoples is more dependent on the independence of human groups than the union of land populations. Every island is a unit. The idea of a confederation comes more naturally than that of an empire. The relationships that sustain it are more relaxed than those that are needed to maintain the cohesion of a land-based empire. Culture becomes something definite: a shared myth. Between cities a *πολιτεύμα*, or co-citizenship, began to form, but without a sufficiently widespread unifying myth this democracy among cities never fully developed. A lot of mistakes were made. I avoid for now dwelling on the subject of *politeuma*, which Paul also mentions (Phil 3:20) and which, I repeat, could offer a stimulating paradigm for our times. But we come back to this when we speak about the *συνπολιτεία*. We are now still seeking to understand the meaning of the word.

He politiké meant η *πολιτική τέχνη*, which should be translated not as "the art of amateur politics," but rather as the art of conviviality or good "cohabitation." In other words, it is both the art of government and the art of living together in the *polis* as citizens. The two go together. It involves both knowing how to live and knowing how to govern. Just as there is a human process of literacy, that is, the art of reading and writing, there is also a process of "politicization" geared to realizing the human potential. Many populations may be highly literate yet have a poor perception of the political dimension. Reading the daily newspaper

⁶ See K. Hoheisel, "Religionogeographie," in *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe* (Stuttgart, 1988), for a brief summary of this discipline.

is not the equivalent of the activity that takes place in the *agorā*. The so-called democracy in the United States of North America, for instance, interests less than half of the adult population. The other half are only concerned whether or not their individual freedom is respected. Strictly speaking, we could say that it is *outside* politics that these individuals find the political dimension. But let us go back to Greece.

From very early on, the need was felt to reflect upon this *τεχνη*, the art, the *πρᾶξις*, of the political dimension (although, according to Aristotle, the *τέλος*, the purpose of that which is political, was *πρᾶξις* and not *γνῶσις*, knowledge). This reflection was a science: *η πολιτικὴ επιστῆμη*, which today is known as political science. Greek distinguishes *η πολιτικὴ* from *τα πολιτικά* and *ο πολιτικός*.

He politikē (which was sometimes used as a euphemism for concubine or lover; in French, in fact, the term "public woman" is still used) is the substantive form of *η πολιτικὴ τεχνη* and of *η πολιτικὴ επιστῆμη*, that is, the art of government, of managing public life, and the science of this art.

Ta politika is the sphere of public or community affairs. The opposite is *οικονομία*, the sphere of private or family affairs. The two main spaces dedicated to fulfilling human life were the *oikos* (home) and the *polis* (city). The temple was not a third space since it was part of both the private life at home and the public life in the city. The expression *ta politika* was sometimes the opposite of *βασιλικὴ*, that is, *βασιλικὴ τεχνη*, the art of ruling that was typical of kings.

Ho politikos is the public man, the statesman, the citizen. Literally, *πολιτικὴ χώρα* is the "political space," the *agorā*, the *ager publicus*.

Politics, therefore, was the art and science of managing public affairs and also that of knowing how to live in the public sphere—"Man being by nature a political animal," according to the famous phrase by Aristotle: *ο ανθρώπος φυσει πολιτικον ζων*.

To govern is a human activity, but for what purpose? According to Plato, who reflected on the subject, it was to enable the realization of justice (*δικαιοσύνη*). This justice, says Plato, requires *σωφροσύνη*, serenity, harmony between the governors and the governed (*Protagoras* 323a). One word that may come close to this is the German *Besonnenheit*, or the Sanskrit *samatā* (*sāmānya*): equanimity (harmony, balance), or maybe the Catalonian *seny*. *Sōphrosynē* is not a technique, a means of governing, or of practicing justice. *Sōphrosynē* is a condition of politics, which becomes both cause and effect in a vital circle. The word is practically untranslatable. In Latin it was translated as *prudentia* (a term that can no longer be rendered as "prudence" since the latter has become practically synonymous with shrewdness), which means, in essence, the health of the spirit. The word refers to intelligence, *φρήν*, which is not schizophrenic but rather "sophronic." *Σάος* (*σως*) means sound, healthy, intact, well preserved. *Φρονησίς* would therefore be the capacity for thinking, feeling, living, being in possession of all one's faculties. In order to realize this *sōphrosynē*, this harmony, citizens and leaders both must be virtuous.

Αρετή, virtue, is a fundamental idea of that which is political. Since Plato, antiquity has recognized that the quintessential political virtue is *sōphrosynē*, along with justice. This *sōphrosynē* is the basic attitude of Man. Essentially, it is Man's "knowing how to be human," and since he is only fulfilled within the *polis*, it represents basic political virtue. Everything is connected. Politics is not a specialty that can be isolated from life.

As in all classical thought, here there is a correlation between Man, the city, and the cosmos. The three aspects of society (military, commercial, and intellectual) correspond to the three powers or faculties of the soul: bravery, the love of things, and the love of knowledge. These faculties correspond to the three virtues of *ανδρεία*: strength; *σωφροσύνη*, serenity; and *σοφία*, wisdom. They are also the three forces that preserve the universe. Here we have a structure

that is common to many cultures. For example, that of the *lokasamgraha* in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the maintenance of the cohesion of the universe, the proper function of *dharma*; or that of the Bible, religion as a Covenant, *berith*, the pact or testament that maintains the cosmos, and in particular the people (of Israel)—although the alliance of YHWH with Noah also includes all living beings, the whole earth, as Genesis 9 tells us; or again, the *συνέχεια*, the “keeping together” according to Stoicism and the Church Fathers, as the cohesive force that holds together the universe (whether it be the *anima mundi*; the righteous, good Christians, according to the *Didaché*; or true Jews, according to Israel). We might also add the concept of emperor in China and other parts of the world, and many other examples.

I insist on this aspect because a fragmented and superficial interpretation often deforms the meaning of the political, considered as an individual art or a more or less subjective science geared to managing power.

Summing up, that which is political, in its very essence, is not the art or science of effectively governing a given *polis*, but the art and science of (re)integrating Man into the *active* harmony of the universe. I say *active* because the specific nature of the human being should not be underestimated. Other animals do not have the political dimension that Man has, in the sense of an art or a science. Man has the power—and duty—to lead the cosmos to its perfection. It is this macrocosm/microcosm correlation that forms the basis for the political sphere. We are still far from Machiavelli!

Εὐδαιμονία (well-being, happiness) is the criterion that shows us whether or not we are on the path of *dikaiosynē*, justice. If I am not happy, it means that somewhere along the line justice has been hurt. As it tells us in both the *Dhammapāda* (I, 16) and the Gospel (Mt 25:29): only the righteous man is happy, in this world and the next.

In short, if Man is not only body and soul but also tribe, Greek wisdom considers the *polis* to be this social unity. Man's realization within the *polis*, therefore, is part of his salvation. St. Cyprian declared that *extra Ecclesiam nulla salus* (outside the Church there is no salvation). It would be interesting to trace back the origin of this famous phrase and find out whether its success might be due to the fact that it is the ecclesiastic format of what we have just proposed as the expression of the classical Greek notion of the political: “Outside the city there is no salvation.” Banishment from the city was the harshest punishment a citizen could receive, and represented his complete abasement. This is the political order par excellence in Greek tradition. For Aristotle, the perfection of Man consisted in realizing *αγαθόν*, goodness, as inseparable from *καλόν*. According to the Greeks, there is no beauty without goodness, nor goodness without beauty. The phrase *καλόν καγαθόν*, the Beautiful and the Good, expresses the ideal citizen.

Political order, according to Aristotle, pertains to *πρᾶξις* and not to the other two great human activities, *ποίησις* and *θεωρία*. *Praxis* is an end in itself; the end and the means go hand in hand. The fruit of *praxis* is reaped by the one who performs it. On the other hand, the purpose of *poiesis*, or *technē*, lies outside its agent and aims for the perfection of the object that is being “made.” Lastly, *theoria* is the perfection of the intellect that grasps things as they are (in Latin it was translated as *contemplatio*). Yet it is *praxis* that realizes what is known as *τὸ ζωή*, “the good life,” which also means beautiful, joyful life. Now, this good life can only be achieved in the city: this is to *πολιτικὸν αγαθόν*, the political good. The city is not a neutral place in which Man moves, but is part of his very nature; it is his own space. Without space Man cannot exist, and this human space, which is both temporal and cosmic, is an urban, political space; this is the *polis*. The Aristotelian definition could be translated as: Man is (also) *polis*.

Fustel de Coulanges, in his famous work *La cité antique*, reminds us what the fundamental difference is between *ville* and *cité*. While the latter was the “religious and political

association of families and tribes," the former was the "meeting place, the home and, above all, the sanctuary of this association."⁷ In both cases we are very far from modern urban conglomerations, where everything depends not on the pedestrians but on the wheels of automobiles; and where, for this very reason, the experience of the habitat as an integral part of human nature has become impossible.

Of course, along with the political there has always been the private and the mystical. The private sphere, that of intimacy, that of the home, does not belong to the political order—although, when dealing with, for example, African traditions, these Greek categories should be regarded as no longer valid.⁸

It is significant that "The Crisis of the Western Model of the State" is the subheading for the proceedings of a conference on "public and private."⁹

We also mentioned a mystic side. Throughout the ages mystics have spoken about a transcendence, or an immanence, that allowed them to reach an ever-increasing perfection; yet their point of reference was the city. The *fuga mundi* was, strictly speaking, a *fuga civitatis*. In the West this escape is related above all to the crisis of the city.

Summing up: to classical Greece human perfection, and therefore salvation, is political perfection because Man is a political animal.

The (Roman) Imperium

The optimism of classical Greece, according to which human perfection could be attained in the city, vanished in the face of the power of Rome.

We should bear in mind that the anthropological myth (so to speak) was predominant in classical Greece. The Gods are not the Supreme Being, the Creator of heaven and earth; nor even Zeus is the Supreme God in the monotheistic sense. The Gods were, we might say, the "first citizens" of the city, and it was the city that gave Greeks their identity. To a Greek, declaring his identity did not consist simply in stating whose son (or daughter, wife, etc.) he was, but also to which city he belonged, and this also included his Gods. Being part of the *polis* made him a free man, that is, a complete man. The good of the *polis* was intrinsically bound to his salvation. Rome was to make of citizenship the apotheosis, to the extent that the model for the *orbis*, the world, became the *urbs*, the city. There is a certain similarity between the Roman ideal of universality, of a divine kingdom ("kingdom of Saturn") or "golden age," as Virgil wrote in his fourth *Eclogue* and sixth Book of the *Aeneid*, respectively, and the Christian kingdom of heaven.

And yet these cities, which represented a "communion between Gods and Man" (as the Stoics were fond of saying), fought against each other, and the Romans took advantage of this. The ideal collapsed before even becoming consolidated. Was it only utopia?

It is worth remembering that, during its first centuries, the Roman Empire formed a confederation of autonomous cities. Little by little, these increasingly became the instruments of an administration that was centralized in Rome. The nation-cities disappear. In Rome there was a turning back and a new development. This turning back resulted in a renewed contact with the Empire's ancient myths. Rome understood the implausibility of the great empires of the past, and also the weakness of Greek fragmentation. Hence the new development: the *urbs*—the *urbs* and its citizen, the *civis romanus*, and not the *urbes*, the cities with their

⁷ See Fustel de Coulanges, *La cité antique* (Paris: Hachette, 1864), 229.

⁸ See VV. AA, "Apprendre de l'Afrique noire," *Interculture* 16 (1983): 78.

⁹ See V. Mathieu, *Le public et le privé* (Paris: Aubier, 1979).

free citizens in other civilized areas. Only much later would Roman citizenship be granted to the inhabitants of other cities. The *urbs* is no longer the *polis*; it is the empire-city. There had been in the past imperial cities, where the great emperors resided, but Rome did not seek the magnificence that had brought about their downfall (and which, in fact, was later to cause its own).

Rome's idea was different than that of Athens or Sparta. Rome was a city, but it had the ambition of becoming an empire: *Roma imperialis*. As a city it took advantage of Greek splendor; as an empire it inherited the glory of past empires. This empire is linked to an order, to a civilization: *ordo, potestas, urbs, and orbis*. The keyword is *imperium*, "order, command"; it represents the quintessence of the administrative power of kings, consuls, praetors, generals, and later on, emperors. The *imperium* is not the *imperator*, that is, the *αὐτοκράτωρ*; it is the power (to govern, declare war, join in battle, and sentence to death according to the law). It is the symbol of "order" in practically all its meanings.

By irony of fate, *Roma quadrata* (square Rome) became an *orbis* (circle), with the presumption of embracing the whole of the *orbis terrarum* (world globe). Still today the pope gives his blessing to all, *urbi et orbi*, because the *Urbs* believes it has been chosen to be the center of the *orbis*. We are told that the center of Catholicism is in Rome, although Vatican Council II, stressing the importance of the local church, suggests that we consider the center as being the altar, that is, the community, wherever it is, gathering around Christ.

With the Roman Empire, the idea of universality took on a new form in the West. We shall not speak here about the empires of China, or those of India. To a certain degree, some of these empires were universal, but they did not claim to be universalizable. Initially it was on a geographical and historical level that the Roman ideas took shape. Once it became Christian, the Roman Empire believed that it was universalizable. This was the work of a great movement that was born in Greece and reached its peak in Rome.

The *Stoa* plays here a fundamental role, acting as a bridge between Greece and Rome. What we know as ancient Stoicism (third century BCE) is totally Greek, whereas "new Stoicism" (up until the third century CE) is basically Roman. It is also referred to as imperial Stoicism. The *Stoa* offers us both an element of interiorization and an element of universalization.

In Stoicism, human perfection is not attained in the *polis*, the city, but in the *μεγαλοπόλις*, the great city of humanity. It is significant that the name has been conserved: the *polis* remains the focal point of reference. And, obviously, the "megalopolis" was not the monstrous "urban" conglomerations of today, but referred to the human family. The Gods were present in the *megalopolis* just as they had been in the *polis*. The world had become the common home of Man and the Gods: *mundus quasi communis deorum atque hominum dominus*, says Cicero.

Summing up: Man's political adventure is an integral part of his destiny, his religion. For Plato, *dikaiosynē*, justice, was the basis for the public life (the State and the society) and the soul (life) of Man. For Aristotle, this justice was *κρατιστὴ τῶν ἀρετῶν*, "the first of all virtues"; all the others, along with their application in society, depended on it. For the Greeks, from Solon onward, justice was by no means a human invention, even apart from its identification with the Goddess Dike. It is in his status of citizen—in the etymological sense of the word—that Man reaches fulfillment. The Gods are both those of the city and those of the homeland; religion and politics cannot, and should not, be separated. Some, especially monks and ascetics, would defend an a-cosmic perfection—Plotinus's famous "escape in solitude to the Solitary"—but generally human perfection always has a political dimension. The great sociological rupture came about, paradoxically, with the triumph of Christianity, and more specifically with St. Augustine, as we shall see.

The Split between Political and Religious

Following the history of the word *dikaiosynē*, justice (Kittel dedicated some fifty pages to it¹⁰), we can see how tangible this change was. The key word of all Western tradition, it underwent a fatal dichotomy in the history of Christianity. In a Christian context, in fact, the word *dikaiosynē* means both justice and justification. In English, the dichotomy is even more pronounced: justice and righteousness.

Let us look at a contemporary example of this split: the great tension between the Latin American theologians of liberation and the Church authorities in Rome might be traced back precisely to this. The Vatican tells its priests, "Preach and aim at *justification*," and they answer that it is inseparable from *justice*; the Church says, "Go beyond the political [i.e., justice] and concentrate on the religious [i.e., *justification*]," and the *comunidades eclesiales de base* reply saying that it is impossible for them to undertake this dichotomy. This is even more astonishing if we consider that Christ himself told his cousin John the Baptist (who according to the common interpretation represents the ancient Law), "It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Mt 3:15)—and not cut it in two (as in the judgment of Solomon)—social justice and religious justification. But let us go back to the beginning.

Christianity was born and developed within small, unimportant groups of people who lived in a society rife with the political disenchantment so vividly described by Stoicism. The growth of this society, which the people felt to be unjust, had taken place far from the great lucubrations of Plato, Aristotle, Cato, and Cicero on *aretē* (virtue), *sophrosynē* (serenity), and *eudaimonia* (happiness). If the fullness of human life is linked to the political for the fact that it develops in the city, and if the political system is unjust and does not allow for such fulfillment, then we are at a dead-end. There is no way out; we are lost. Here human conviviality does not offer any possibility of realization because it is founded upon an unjust power that uses it for its own ends, by means of exploitation, injustice, slavery, and alienation. In such a situation, Man has no hope of salvation.

If Man needs social justice in order to fulfill his destiny, but there is no salvation in the city, in what can he hope? How can we grow? How can Man find fulfillment? What would the destiny of slaves be? Is there no salvation of a different order—a salvation for slaves, for all those oppressed by an unjust, inhumane authority? This was St. Paul's experience. Living in a society known to be inhuman, the only way people can save their dignity is to escape from it, in one way or another. *Quid hoc ad aeternitatem?* (What is this to eternity?). "What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?" as Jesus asks (Luke 9:25). We must save human dignity. Christianity (not without reason) was for a long time, and perhaps still is, the religion of slaves, of the disinherited, the exploited, the poor. We should be able to find *eudaimonia*, happiness, and attain salvation even in an unjust society, even if we are not successful in this world.

The Greek ideal, like the Roman, may in some ways seem marvelous. There was a healthy optimism. Man was absorbed in his earthly nature. But there is also a negative side. In classical antiquity the euphoria of victory or success, and the sadness of defeat and failure, reveal a certain nostalgia. Besides this there were also the prospects of those who were not citizens (metics, slaves, and the majority of women), who represented 90 percent of the population. This situation created by the elitist model is unjust. Let us not forget a whole patristic theology that questions the imperial status quo. The Church of the martyrs obviously had to defend

¹⁰ *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1935).

the *αυτεξουσία*, the right and power of self-government. Authority comes from God, not from the emperor, St. Paul tells us.¹¹ Our city is not here below, said the first Christians; on this earth we are all exiles, pilgrims.

From a political point of view, the first Christian generations were anarchic. Political order, that is, imperial dominion, is a direct consequence of sin, declared the Fathers. The salvific society is the church, the tribe within which Man can find salvation. Yet this church is underground; it is that of the catacombs. To the emperor a Christian was not a good citizen. The martyrs were not fanatics who refused to pay tribute to the emperor, and the imperial authority was not so tyrannical and cruel as to punish honest citizens. The conflict was far more profound and tragic. Their refusal was an act of subversion; they did not recognize the Empire's claim to power over the life of human beings. On both sides, the issue was the salvation of Man (in or out of the city: *intra aut extra civitatem*—but *civitas aut ecclesia*?). The *ekklēsia* became the mortal enemy of the *urbs*. Such a vision introduces a fatal dichotomy: the individual is saved, but the person is killed. It was not a question of escaping to the desert or to a monastery; those who sought refuge in these places still played a social role.¹² Like Stoicism, monasticism is an aristocratic movement, in the best sense of the word. Monastic criticism still has a role to play because it is linked to the prevailing context that gives it meaning. Monks are nonviolent witnesses of the infidelity of Christians, and their role is precisely that of prodding the conscience of those who have compromised with Mammon.

The struggle between the religious and the political revealed itself to be impossible when, after Constantine, and especially after Theodosius, Christianity triumphed and became the religion of the State. Paradoxically, and out of loyalty to the tradition of the first three centuries, Christianity had to bring about a split (and this was the lesser evil) between the political and the religious, and here St. Augustine (345–430) played a fundamental role.¹³ Moreover, the long-awaited *parousia* did not happen.

The split between these two realms, these two spheres, caused the vitality of each of them to be undermined. The activity of the political sphere became a mere means that the Christians, qua Christians, were able to do without, as they had for the past three centuries. This activity (i.e., politics) was left to the "specialists," because true life could not be found there. It was not part of "the one thing needful,"¹⁴ and to eternity it had very little value. Besides, there was no need for concern, since after Constantine politics was "in good hands": Christian hands.

There is no such thing as *Christian* politics, it was said, but rather a politics of *Christians*. The medieval tension between *sacerdotium* and *imperium* was already looming; society was on the verge of the abyss separating the clergy from the laity, and it was repeatedly stressed that only the laity could have an active role in politics. This mentality has still not completely disappeared today. The political, as such, is theoretically excluded from the church; political morality is reduced to good intentions, and how they are put into practice is left up to the individual. In certain books on morality the main concern is individual morality. Abortion is one of the gravest sins, while less importance is given to the arms race, economic exploi-

¹¹ Rom 13:1.

¹² See R. Panikkar, *Blessed Simplicity*, in Volume I, Part 2 of this *Opera Omnia*.

¹³ See the excellent article on this subject by E. Pagels, "The Politics of Paradise: Augustine's Exegesis of Genesis 1–3 versus that of John Chrysostom," *Harvard Theological Review* 78 (January–April 1985): 1–2, 67–99.

¹⁴ See Lk 10:42.

tation, and other destructive evils of contemporary society—war, for example. There is an entire casuistry for war (just war, war of aggression, and so on), yet there is none for divorce, abortion, or euthanasia.

A split between the political and the religious has been established: while human conviviality is a support and a benefit it is nevertheless secondary and incidental, because (the order of) the city has lost its Gods, and the true *eudaimonia* is the other kind of happiness, *beatitudo*, the perfection of Man in *dikaiosynē*, interpreted as divine justification. This is a different and far superior blessedness! St. Augustine was to give it its definitive formulation, which is still the one used today.

The bishop of Hippo is known to have wept when he received the news, in 410, of the fall of Rome and its plunder by the hordes of Alaric. Constantine's dream of Christianity would never be realized; now there were two *πόλεις*: the *civitas Dei* (city of God) toward which Christians gravitated, and the *civitas hominum* (city of men), conceived according to a basically Manichaean view. This was the birth of the West. Note, however, that salvation is always attained in a *civitas (caelestis)*.

Christianity and the Empire

From this time on, the place for salvation was no longer the city but the Church, which represented the place of pilgrimage toward the *civitas Dei*. As long as this "congregation" lived a purely eschatological ideal and stayed underground, the fields remained separate—but what would happen when the ark of salvation itself became the civil society? The Roman Empire was succeeded by the empire of Christendom: the Holy Roman Empire. The idea of the empire was the order of the eternal rooted in the temporal. The *imperium* once again became cosmic and heavenly. In this is manifest the tension between the papacy and the empire, the sacred and the profane, the religious and the political.

There was a hierarchy, yet everything was still connected. This empire had two powers but only one strength: the authority that came from God. The temporal was subordinated to the eternal. A distinction has to be made between these two powers without separating them, since the political is an inherent part of human life, and Man can only be fulfilled by integrating this dimension. Yet the political order, which is that of Christendom, the imperial order in the true sense of *imperium* (not to be confused with what would later on be known as imperialism), in turn seeks to provide Man with total unity. One could not be fully human until one became a member of the perfect community represented by the empire. Belonging to Christendom meant being subjects of the empire, engaged in building the kingdom of God on earth. The mystery of Incarnation is interpreted here as the intrinsic necessity of being embodied in the political order for the sake of securing a Christian, and therefore fully human, existence. We must remember that until the nineteenth century Catholic Rome defended the divine right of the Papal States. Up until the Second Vatican Council the Church defined itself as *societas perfecta*, the perfect society and the model for every other society. A similar idea can be found in the conception of the State of Israel as a State founded by God—or by (divinized) history, the *Heilsgeschichte*.

This empire was maintained by a cohesive force (and here I use the words in the fullest possible sense) represented, on one hand, by *potestas* and, on the other, by *auctoritas*. Power and authority. *Auctoritas* is recognized through the gift of faith, *potestas* through the fact of having strength.¹⁵ The cross and the sword. An exaggerated caricature has often

¹⁵ See above, "Authority and Power."

been made of this. Considerable abuses have been committed, certainly, but if we are to understand this historic moment we must look beyond the abstract simplifications, abuses, and degenerations. In the Middle Ages a certain biblical text was frequently quoted: *Una manu sua faciebat opus, et altera tenebat gladium* (With one hand they worked, and with the other held a sword [Neh 4:17]), as a symbol of the two powers, spiritual and temporal. The relationship between sword and cross, in its initial symbolism, was supposed to help heal the rift made by Augustine in Christianity: two worlds, two cities, two loyalties, two orders. Augustinian thought must, of course, be approached with a sense of undertone and in its entirety. We cannot underestimate the importance of another of his lapidary phrases: *Deus Christus patria est quo imus, homo Christus via est qua imus* (Christ as God is our homeland to which we go, Christ as Man is the way by which we go). Christ as God is the *civitas Dei*, Christ as Man the *civitas hominum*.

Christ cannot be divided; he is one. The tradition that followed, however, was not able to avoid this dichotomy.

*The Restoration of Unity:
Christendom and Its Crisis*

Four centuries after Augustine, on Christmas night in the year 800, Charlemagne was crowned emperor by the pope, and the dream of a Roman Empire returned in full force—but not without ambiguity. This time it was an expressly Christian empire. Only a good citizen of the *Sacrum Romanum Imperium Germanicum* would have access to salvation. *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, and this Church is a visible society, perfectly established upon the earth. This was the regime that would later be known as the political order of "thesis," as distinct from the (liberal) regime of "hypothesis."

It is easy to understand the unrest of the thirteenth century and, later on, that of Luther. St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), who represented a new spirit, found a formula of reconciliation that many regarded as ingenious. There is a hierarchical order between the *beata civium vita* (happy life of citizens) formulated by Cicero, and the *vita coelestis* (heavenly life) of the *visio beatifica*. Translating Aristotle's *arêté* as Cicero's *virtus*, Thomas Aquinas says, *Non est ergo ultimus finis multitudinis congregatae vivere secundum virtutem, sed per virtuosam vitam pervenire ad fruitionem divinam* (The ultimate purpose of a community gathered together is not to live in accordance with virtue but through virtuous living to attain to the enjoyment of God). The political is not the religious, but the two are closely related: one is reached through the other. Not only the Church, but also human society is a *societas perfecta*. A large part of the theologians of subsequent periods defended the autonomy of the *regimen politicum* against the *potestas civilis* of the popes.

This polarity, which Thomas sought to maintain, lost its strength after the nominalist period, and was abolished after the Enlightenment.

Initially, the Lutheran Reformation proclaimed the doctrine of radical separation: *sola fides*. Up until the Middle Ages, ethics, economy, and politics were one single science (*scientia*). They represented three different branches within the same human journey that had one single goal: the well-being of Man (which entails justice, ethics, economy, and politics). These are now separate. The human being has become individualized; his life develops and expands outside political activity. It is too risky to depend on others. Luther makes a clear-cut and total distinction between justice and justification. The latter is justification through grace, that which leads to heaven and eternal happiness. Justice refers to a different order.

*The Extinction of Christendom,
and the Birth of States*

Let us briefly summarize the events that marked the extinction of Christendom. On Easter Monday, April 17, 1536, in the great salon of paraments in the Vatican, the last emperor of Christendom, Charles V (responsible, in 1527, for the infamous "sack of Rome"), was preparing to preside over the Easter celebrations when he received the news that Francis I—the supreme rebel who dared to fight for an independent State—had declared war on the Empire. The latter only continued to stand, in fact, as long as the emperor's authority was accepted, and up until this time it was still believed in; it was still a myth! The emperor informed the pope, Paul III, and the latter, who despite not being German was all too well acquainted with *Realpolitik* (and who, moreover, had made a secret pact with the king of France), replied, "So, what can we do?" Charles still believed in the Empire; the pope did not. The Easter Monday Eucharistic celebration would not take place that year. The Empire crumbled, its authority and all belief in it broken down. What use is there in maintaining cohesion with power (*potestas*) alone?

This complex situation, full of contradictions and diachronies, marked the birth of States. In the beginning they accepted the ideal of Christendom in theory, but in practice they rebelled against it. Both France, the "first-born of the Church," and Italy, the religious capital of Christendom, have been known for centuries as the main hubs of fermentation for new ideas. On the one hand, they accepted the ideal of Christendom, but to the French the attraction of power and a more concrete independence was too great a temptation to resist; it was more appealing to be converted into an empire while abandoning imperial Christendom. Italy, which was divided into separate nations, could not allow itself such a dream. On the other hand, the spirit of the Renaissance was too powerful to not resist Christian theocracy. There had been too much abuse of power in the name of Christ. The Crusades had left behind a profound and widespread disenchantment, revealing the spiritual and material weakness of Christendom; the Inquisition spread terror; the papacy was corrupt. It was a struggle between God and Caesar.

The ideal of Christendom was shaken. Luther claimed to be as Christian as Pope Leo X, if not more so, yet he dreamed of a new Christendom with a more flexible spirit, which would allow more freedom for individual conscience. Francis I professed to be as Christian as Charles V, but wanted to manage the affairs of his peoples in his own way, without foreign interferences. In short, widely different human groups sought autonomy. The divine power shared between the pope and the emperor was subdivided and extended to other institutions; princes aspired to royalty of an imperial nature, while recognizing divine sovereignty and that of Christ, and kings continued to be consecrated like bishops. This was the period that marked the birth of what could be termed royal nations, which today we would call nation-states. All these States still had supranational cohesion because they recognized de jure that which de facto was beginning to collapse: Christendom. This latter, following its typical "strategy," retreated until 1870, although since the abdication of Charles V in 1556, political Christendom practically ceased to exist.

A century later a Baroque Spanish thinker, Francisco de Quevedo (1580–1645), wrote the famous book *Política de Dios y gobierno de Cristo*, which could be regarded as a compendium of the political in the regime of Christendom. Christendom continued to be a myth, even though it became secularized and changed its name. This myth would gradually become "Europe," then "the West," then "civilization" (Western, of course), and today "technocracy" and "democracy."

The history of the modern world is still the continuation of European and Christian history. The States, as they were founded, were still the heirs of the idea of a basically secularized Christendom; they formed a body of which each one was an independent part. In this "body," which represented the highest instance, resided true sovereignty. The unifying myth had not yet disappeared. Every nation has chosen to become a State through a process of individualization that corresponded to the spirit of the times. At the beginning, however, the States presented themselves as if they were the members of a family. All the nation-states were united in a search for a common ideal that embraced religion, culture, civilization, and conquest. All together, they set off to conquer. Naturally, they fought against each other—Portuguese, Spaniards, Dutch, and so on—but they all pursued the same common goal: to conquer, civilize, convert, and unify the world. They shared a supranational ideal. The notion of sovereignty is inherent to the idea of empire, or Christendom, but not of nation. The empire is sovereign; it is supreme because it has a divine sanction. At the beginning of the seventeenth century it was still the pope, in theory, who granted nations the right of conquest and decided on how the world would be shared out. The idea of absolute sovereignty was still foreign to the concept of nation.

Later on, all this disintegrated and was replaced by the idea of the nation-state: a sovereign nation enjoying total sovereignty. Thus arose the concept of State, which then became absolute, founded no longer on the remains of an ideal or faith, but simply on an ideology.

It is interesting to notice that during the Renaissance the word *natio*, nation, was not used in reference to a country: Spain, Austria, Germany, and so on. The true *nationes* were university groups that were formed of those who spoke the same language and were of the same ethnic group. Students who studied in Bologna encountered the *nationes* of those who spoke Piedmontese, Florentine, Spanish, or Catalan. The *natio* was the tribe; those who formed it were the locals of each specific area, who shared a common language and culture. This was the heir to the *polis*. The word *natio*, "birth," comes from the verb *nascor*, to be born. The "nation" is the offspring of religion. It is not a "political" concept in the strict sense of the current word, but rather in an animistic sense. This area, this part of the earth where I first saw the light, my valley, the human group that speaks my dialect and to which I immediately respond not only with my thoughts but also with my heart—this is my *nation*. Nations are telluric, prehistoric.

The old Europe still has human-scale nations. To give just one example, Andorra is a nation, a country, with its own people, mountains, language, and customs: a bioregion. Strictly speaking, it did not become a State until very recently. The government was composed of the elders of the Seven Valleys; it was they who formed its General Council and represented the sovereignty of this tiny nation in the face of its two gigantic neighbors, France and Spain. For six months of the year the president of the French Republic acted as the *ex officio* supreme leader of Andorra, and for the other six months the bishop of La Seu d'Urgell, in Catalonia, was the co-prince of the nation. It had its own police force (note the etymology of the word, deriving, of course, from *polis*) but no army. Everyday life was governed by the Council of the Seven Valleys, but today Andorra has a modern, "democratic" constitution, as a logical consequence of the impact of the economico-technological complex. Andorra's independence is in jeopardy, indeed, is already ruined because the nation has been transformed into a so-called free market, where mainly the French and Spanish buy consumer goods without having to pay the taxes that are imposed in their own countries. This shows us that the new political solution we are seeking cannot ignore the economic factor that is typical of technocracy.

A nation is not formed overnight, whatever the historical events may be; a long period of growth is needed before it can acquire its own personality.

The Split in the West

On one hand, we have Luther (1483–1540), who represents an extreme position: the Sermon on the Mount is not a suggestion (on how to reach perfection) but rather a commandment for all Christians. However, as Bismarck was to say centuries later, "One cannot govern a State with the Sermon on the Mount." On the other hand, we have Machiavelli (1469–1527), who represents the break with the Greek tradition and the Thomist compromise. His approach is so radically different that he does not even dare to use the word "politics" to express what he means: the technique for gaining and holding power, the art of running a State by using power, the cunning needed to overcome internal and external enemies by any means capable of succeeding. The ends justify the means. As he himself explicitly remarks, "In a corrupt city glory must be sought in a different manner than in a city still *politically* alive." Politics was still the harmonious whole we have described.

However, extremes eventually meet. According to Luther, who radicalized Augustine, human nature is corrupt, and therefore, according to the nature of things, everything was allowed. All political order was the result of the original sin, every "city is corrupt." Gaining heaven, as Descartes was later to say, has nothing to do with philosophy—or with politics. In the same period it was said that science has no relationship with theology. Here we had the fragmentation of knowledge. Then along came Hobbes (1588–1679), who, more daringly, went to the extent of claiming that one can be a good citizen even without being virtuous. This was a far cry from the Greeks, who believed that life within the society and politics demanded complete virtue. Even today, many believe it is possible to be a good teacher without being virtuous; a qualification and a certain professional competence is enough. Distinction has been made between the various fields, and this is defined as "specialization." The private life of an architect, for example, has nothing to do with his professional life.

The dichotomy was no longer solely between heaven and earth, but between the individual and the State (as the symbol of "civilized" society), the private and the public. Morality was not allowed to interfere with this other activity, which was the conquest of power. Morality is the *mos traditus a patribus*, the "custom inherited from the fathers," or better still, as Cicero would say, *mos est hominum*, "the custom of Man." They were linked to the past. The new activity, which would later be known as politics, was projected toward the future, the new. It had to free itself from the weight of the past and the old customs. We have come a long way from the quote by Heraclitus at the beginning of this study.

This reference allows us to point out the fundamental differences between the human context of antiquity and that of our times. Machiavelli is well known: "Concentrate on your goal and head straight for it! Free yourself of all worries, laws, and moral constrictions that have nothing to do with what you want."

This was the culmination of the split: Man's ultimate goal, in the classical era, was considered to be his fulfillment in community life. Both Christianity and Judaism accepted this vision, though they gave it a different eschatological interpretation than that of Greece and Rome. Judaism was perhaps able to provide an even more powerful example than Greece. It had no dichotomy between political and religious, no distinction between history and eschatology, no projection of the destiny of the chosen people into another world. The Judaism of the Diaspora had lived with this eschatological tension for thousands of years, sustained by the hope of the promise. As long as the worldly city, the empire, does not allow for human fulfillment, the tension remains creative; humans live in hope, in a state of *epektasis*. But when either the Promised Land or Christendom are realized on earth, then difficulties arise.

Christians of this period lived in ambivalence, hope, and scandal. The ideal envisaged by Christendom was the kingdom of God on earth, but the failure of Christendom is undeniable. True, it succeeded in creating a degree of civilization, but the Renaissance fittingly emphasized the abyss between Christendom, as it appeared, and the gospel. Certainly, Augustine and, after him, Luther offered us a dualistic solution: it is in the City of God, in the eschatological communion of saints, in eternal life, that life on earth may be lived in full. But nonetheless, a certain relationship of causality and hierarchy between the "two ways" was accepted. It was through righteous behavior in the city of Man, in politics, that eternal life is deserved. But this thrust toward justice (for the kingdom) is seen as a free gift of grace. Salvation is the fruit of *sola gratia*. Thus Christendom moved away from the gospel; the order of good works no longer counted. This order, however, was to gain its own independence and become autonomous, casting off the weight of morality and religion. On one hand there would be religion, on the other politics; the order of grace and that of nature. The split was now complete.

At the beginning, no one dared to call this independent order "politics." It was the order of power, the means for achieving a specific goal, a technology for conquering power. It was only in the eighteenth century that the word "politics" began to embrace the idea of Aristotle and Thomas (including those of Augustine and Luther) and that of Machiavelli and Hobbes (including the *Realpolitik* and the "reason of State" that derived from them).

In this fascinating venture of going back to an ancient word and giving it a new meaning, I see something that greatly transcends the actual question we are dealing with here. It is the power of words, the dark or unconscious forces of history, and the weight of human archetypes that make certain words triumph and survive rather than others. Man—not without reason and not without danger—always tends toward unity. *Not without reason*: Man's activity, in society, in our case (albeit with different motives and in different directions) is an activity of a unitary order that corresponds to that which, traditionally, was known as the sphere of the *polis*, that is, the political. *Not without danger*: there is an enormous gap between actions geared to the common good, to happiness, and those geared to the conquest of power. Should the former activity be called "ethics" or "morality," and the latter, "politics"? Or vice versa, should we call the classical notion "politics," and the latter "governing technique"? Or perhaps we should make a compromise and respect the traditional political dimension but reserve "politics" for that which in German is referred to as *Machtkunst* (the art of power). This is a very important decision, which has to do precisely with the "politics" of words. In everyday language, politics is the art of managing and gaining power; personally, however, I do not like reducing the word to its modern meaning.

An example might make this clearer. For thousands of years, the word "science" referred to the intellectual (spiritual) assimilation of a reality and also identification with it. Science was *scientia*, *gnōsis*, *jñāna*, *connaissance* (being born together); it had redeeming power, it was the communion with the spiritual—intelligible and divine—universe. Today, the common use of the word is taken from the so-called scientific disciplines in the sense of the measurement and prediction of phenomena. Should the first (and primary) meaning of "science" be abandoned and the term be reduced to its modern-day meaning? This is the politics of words.

Max Weber's definition, of Machiavellian inspiration, has become popular: "Das Streben nach Machtanteil oder nach Beeinflussung der Machtverteilung" (striving to share power or striving to influence the distribution of this power). Should we just accept the use of the word "politics" in the Machiavellian sense, despite the fact that in *The Prince* Machiavelli does not use the word to describe his art? He speaks of the *State*, though elsewhere he refers to *vivere politico* (political life).

Although politics appears too often as a technique of means (to exercise power or to govern effectively) it cannot be separated from its ethical aspect, as is evident from most of the manifestos and programs of political parties, which invariably pay tribute to ethics in their moralistic, and often moralizing, declarations. Their intentions may be veined with hypocrisy, yet hypocrisy reveals a deeper level of reality. Standing for election for the management of public affairs implies the desire that they be managed *well*. I would say, then, that there is ambivalence but not ambiguity. The political is born of the public sphere, but both the public and the private spheres belong to that which is human. It is easy to forget that politics is not only the art of governing but, correspondingly, that of living *under* a government, and also *in* the city, that is, of participating in public affairs.

And here we come to the heart of the modern situation: politics reduced to an activity centered on the State. We might quote Hegel by saying that the citizen's life (which belongs to the sphere of the *political*) and political life (modern *politics*) are different, and therefore must be mediated. This mediation would consist in the representation of social groups and classes within the State. The State would therefore govern political life but without intervening in social life. According to Hegel, the State is the *Wirklichkeit der sittlichen Idee* (actual reality of the ethical idea).

After Hegel, and in his wake, came Marx's "philosophical" triumph. I say "philosophical" because both Marxists and non-Marxists seem to accept this way of presenting the issue. Marx takes revolution into consideration because it enables the passage of the political to the State, so that the political becomes an affair of State. Since, according to Marx, the State is *die Gesellschaft in Aktion* (society in action), the counterrevolution will accept the rules of the game, because the political traditionally belongs to society (bourgeois society, from Marx's point of view). From then on, the State will be the exclusive proprietor of the political. The State is not the organic (or, to Marx, "degenerate") society, but rather the sum of individuals having no distinction of group, social class, religion, hierarchy, and so on. Universal suffrage is the symbol and the realization of the individualization of Man. "Revolution" would not make any distinction between the various political elements of society. What mattered was achieving maximum well-being for a maximum number of individuals.

Thus Hegel's mediation was nullified (*aufgehoben*). Everything was now reduced to the State and individuals. Society was to be without classes, privileges, hierarchies, or polities (now exclusively an affair of State). The State was legitimized through the collective will of individuals, and what a fall this was from politics to statism! Again we see the irony of words: *status* (statute, social rank, family situation, official title, etc.) was now absorbed by the *status* (the State) that is known as the political State.

The Justification of the State

We have already mentioned this, but let us emphasize it again: the *ancien régime* had become unbearable. The birth of the States was due not only to a prevarication but also to the crumbling of the former ideal and the vanishing of the myth of the human, and especially Christian, community. One can understand Luther's famous *zwei Reiche Lehre*, "doctrine of the two Kingdoms," according to which *iustitia civilis* has nothing to do with *iustitia coram Deo*. "Civil justice," which now dominates the Christian society, is not even a preparation for "justice before God."

All kinds of theocracies have abused the answer of the Oracle of Delphi. According to Xenophon (*Memorabilia* IV.3), when asked how we might make ourselves acceptable in the sight of the Gods, the Oracle replied, "Follow the laws of the State." This State is now

interpreted as absolute. The medieval theory of the two swords (the religious and political powers) is now no longer plausible, since it would mean that the secular branch holding the power should submit to the papacy, which itself arrogates the authority. The political cannot be subordinated to the religious since the latter is already immersed in the political.

I do not intend to dwell on the abuses of absolute powers, monarchies and feudal regimes. The ancients already knew that *sumum ius summa iniuria* (the greatest right [can become] the greatest injury) (Cicero, *De Officiis* I.33).

Clearly, it is not a question of restoring the *status quo ante*. One extreme does not justify the other. The answer lies not in opposing the heteronomy of the empire with the autonomy of the State, but in the *ontonony* of peoples. Our defense of transcendence does not identify with the theory of an institutional Church over which the political has no jurisdiction.

The State, in fact, represented decentralization, a more human scale in comparison with the empire, and above all a space of freedom for special situations. Let us not forget that originally modern States wanted to be recognized as Christian, and believed they could be more authentically Christian by being separated from (monolithic) Christendom.

Sovereign States or Autochthonous Nations?

The modern State replaces the empire of the past, but with one fundamental difference, and also an internal contradiction: that of shared sovereignty, that is, a multiplicity of sovereignties. The empire was *sovereign*, that is, supreme, because it had received a divine sanction. Empires have always claimed absolute sovereignty over the earth, precisely because of this deep-rooted belief that their power came from heaven. The efforts of Roman emperors to justify this supremacy are well known. Ultimately, it is a tribute paid to human dignity. If we are all in a certain sense equal, and there is a power that claims to be *das Höchste* (the highest), as Kant says, this supremacy, this sovereignty must come from Above, otherwise to exercise it would be an insult to other human beings. Indeed, why would an individual (the monarch) or a group (the imperial body) claim to be not only superior (by force, wealth, etc.) but the absolute highest, the best, the only one, without equal?¹⁶ The martyrs, as we have already said, well understood the religious-political impact of their defiance against the empire.

Later on, Christendom would claim for itself the sovereignty that the martyrs had called into question. This sovereignty born of God's supreme authority, represented on earth by the power of the *sovereign* pontiff, is a concept that has been destroyed by human weakness, scandalous abuses, and the historical process of a new stage of consciousness. Philosophically speaking, this is the crisis of mediation. In rebelling against Christendom, modern States do not recognize that it has any right to superior power, but they themselves claim to be sovereign, and intend to keep for themselves the authority that Christendom once had. Through this process the States, considering themselves the heirs to Christendom, claim to have legitimate power to reject the "separatist" movements born within the States themselves. The "right" of modern States to inflict the death penalty is still a *theologoumenon*¹⁷ inherited from Christendom.

Everywhere in the world it is clear that the State is going through a crisis.¹⁸ In a democratic atmosphere it is natural that as peoples become increasingly aware of themselves they

¹⁶ For a perfect model of this see L. Baudin, "La Vie de l'Inca suprême," in *La vie quotidienne au temps des derniers Incas* (Paris: Hachette, 1955), 77–92.

¹⁷ Theological hypothesis or stance.

¹⁸ See for example, B. Parekh, "When Will the State Wither Away?," *Alternatives* 15, no. 3 (1990): 247–62.

demand greater independence. This is typical in the case of African nations. The situation in India, meanwhile, is irreversible. It is significant that in Punjab, for example, which enjoys a degree of prosperity gained through hard work, the general inclination is toward greater autonomy, and some even aspire to a totally independent *Khalistan*. Other States, as soon as they acquire a clearer political awareness, will claim greater independence. This phenomenon is similar both in Eastern and Western Europe. We are faced with an enormous difficulty: States, given their current structure, consider aspirations toward independence to be harmful to the country, an attack on its integrity, and often as treason against the "homeland," and such demands have a traumatic effect. This is why it is urgent that we make a distinction between State and nation, and find adequate forms of *συνπολιτεία*, conviviality.

Here there is a contradiction, which we did not have with empires. By asserting its own sovereignty, each State is implicitly declaring a war on all the other States. Once again we are back at the *bellum omnium contra omnes*, the "war of all against all." Bloc alliances are formed. On the other hand, on principle, the empire is one. It is one because it is sovereign, and two absolute powers could not be tolerated, in the same way that two monotheistic Gods could not coexist.

No empire, in fact, willingly accepts an equal. Sovereignty excludes equality. *Delenda Carthago* (Carthage must be destroyed); *Deutschland über alles* (Germany over all). The modern empires of the so-called superpowers only reluctantly tolerate each other, since the intended purpose of every empire is to represent world order. The nuclear deterrent becomes a necessity. Theoretically, a plurality of empires is a contradiction in terms. If a tiny country like Nicaragua is seen as a threat (ideological, since it poses no territorial or economic threat) to the North American empire, this danger must be eliminated. The recent collapse of the Western Communist empire responded to a historical need. Two empires cannot coexist. The problem is knowing whether the existence of even *one* empire is necessary. Once the rival empire of the United States has been eliminated, based on the intrinsic logic of their ideology they will have to proclaim a New World Order. Thus the old concept of the empire emerges in all its power.

Every State that has been born as a result of the dismantling of an empire (especially the Christian empire) was founded as an autonomous constituent, and together they form a plurality with very distinct characteristics. The modern idea of State is a *theologoumenon*, despite how the contemporary lay States may view it. Now, since there cannot be more than one *universal* sovereignty, each State is allowed its own *territorial* sovereignty so that it can manage its own affairs without foreign interference. Borders, it is still said today, are sacred and untouchable; hence, the human community is split apart. The only acceptable relationships are those of a certain democracy among States, in which each one, recognized as individual, undertakes (exclusively in its own interests) to maintain a peaceful coexistence with the others.

Every individual represents a vote. This can produce positive results when all the individuals are equal, at least in power, and act according to a common myth, like that of Christendom in the past. However, no democracy can exist among sovereign States that are not equal. For what "reason of State" should the United States, for example, make sacrifices for and tolerate Granada or Panama, if those regimes do not operate in *their* interests? Why should they, if they are powerful enough to "destabilize" these governments without worrying about suffering the consequences?

And so we come to the politics of blocs, along with mutual threats and nuclear deterrents. Dozens of States will mobilize their forces to take part in punitive expeditions against border transgression if such appears to be an attack against "world order," at least based on the ideas—or to serve the interests—of the empire that believes itself to be in charge. Atrocities will

be overlooked if they are perpetrated in a sovereign State, or as long as they do not upset the status quo of "world order." Machiavelli has won! The Gulf War, the widespread indifference toward the Kurds, the people living in the Sahel, and numerous others—and the conflicts in the former USSR, former Yugoslavia, and many other countries—are all examples, each one shocking and bloody, of this situation.

Contemporary States seek emancipation from the tutorship of Europe in the same way that European States, of which they are a copy, were emancipated from that of Christendom. Nonetheless, and for several centuries, the myth of Christendom has outlived its political reality. It is significant that up until the eighteenth century all the great peace treaties began with: *In nomine sanctae et indivisae Trinitatis* (In the name of the holy and undivided Trinity). The Congress of Vienna in 1814 completed the transfer from the myth of Christendom to the myth of Europe. It was only thanks to the powerful archetypes of history that this *Realpolitik* event became known as the "Holy Alliance," despite there being nothing holy about it.

Today, the myth of a holy Europe has collapsed. Its first fatal blow came during the First World War, followed by the final blow during the Second. The myth of the West, which was sometimes known as Western civilization (with the vestige of Christendom) and later became the myth of technocratic civilization, was the successor of Christendom, just as the latter was the continuation (albeit modified) of the ancient myth of the empire. Myths do not die easily. In our modern-day age, the models of world politics are no longer Europe and the West, but rather the technocratic complex. This is the new empire, the new Christendom, and the States are individual components in this "international" order. It is no coincidence that the United States, the leader of this empire, is from a technological point of view the most "advanced" in the world. It will not be long before the (as yet dormant) economic war between States breaks out, and new trade and influence blocs will emerge to upset and threaten the imperial vision of the "new world order." Talk about the tenacious persistence of the myth!

This contradiction, inherent to the sovereign State, becomes even more obvious when the ideology of the State is extended throughout the world. The current crises and fractures in Africa and Asia are too quickly put down to the "primitivism" of these populations and their "democratic unpreparedness," as the Westernized elite of the same continents often describe it. Are they not still classed as "developing countries"? Would it not be appropriate to also highlight the State's inherent weakness and its unfamiliarity with the psychology and history of these peoples?

Again it is contemporary Europe that, in an outwardly pragmatic manner and in keeping with a dynamism of history, seeks to surpass the ideology of the State—and consequently of the sovereign State. I am referring, of course, to the new Europe that is being forged, which at the moment is faced with the dilemma of whether to become a new gigantic State based on the same historical inertia of empires, or create a new conception (federalist?) of the relations between the peoples and nations of the continent.

And in this transition, what happens to the nations and their peoples? It is important to emphasize that the phenomenon that characterizes the mid-twentieth century was not the independence of nations, but rather the proliferation of so-called independent States—on condition, of course, that they are willing to live, or rather to work, in order to pay back their debts.

Little by little, as we discover the *nation*, in the true sense of the word, we are freed from the need for a State, and the distinction between power and authority regains its value. This marks the beginning of a new paradigm for dealing with the problem. As I have already suggested, the concept of nation does not imply the concept of sovereignty. There is

a nation because there are *nations*. And there are nations because there are different human identities, cultures, ethnic groups, and collective personalities. Nations can find a unifying myth that is not based on strength or power. It is a good sign that these ideas are now taking shape and being studied.

This entails replacing the dream of sovereign States, full of contradictions and the seeds of war, with the myth of autochthonous nations. The world is searching for alternatives, which will not be found either by starting from State individualism or by reluctantly renouncing sovereignty out of fear and selfishness.

In Europe, Asia, and Africa we are faced with different situations. A tribe or a given confederation of tribes constitutes a unit, a group, a consciousness transmitted through language, customs, rites, taboos, totems, and so on, the combination of which guarantees a certain flexibility. Nations have poorly defined borders. In some countries, such as those of North America and South America, the concept of nation is much vaguer. It is possible to provide theoretical definitions, such as language, territory, customary law, and so on. Entire books are dedicated to describing what a nation is.

I have already referred to a previous attempt of mine¹⁹ to define a nation as an entity that is invariably integrated in a vaster human group. As the word suggests, a *nation* is first of all a natural phenomenon. A nation is made up of "natives." It is generally known as a people, which forms an ethnic group, to *εθνος, gens* (from *gignere*, to generate), race, clan. When a people acquires a cultural and therefore political consciousness, it becomes a nation. A nation is an organized *people*. Every nation establishes variously general and lasting societies geared to pursuing set goals. Today the political organization of nations is known as the *State*. Now, in our modern era, because States were born from the dismantling of the empire, and the empire was considered to be sovereign, they have also claimed to be sovereign States. Yet since the concept of multiple sovereignties is contradictory in itself, States find themselves in a permanent situation of latent war. There cannot be more than one *potestas suprema*. My political project would consist in focusing on *nation-peoples* rather than *nation-states*.

Between the monist ideology of the empire and the atomism of States lies the phenomenon of nations, tribes, peoples, and ethnic groups. Their internal relations more closely resemble those of the members of an organism than those of individuals in an organization. The Buddhist *dharmakāya* (body of the Law) and the Christian mystical body, or the biological organism and the modern hologram, might provide us with analogies. Each member is unique and complete; it represents the whole, while at the same time it is *ontonomically* united to the entire organism. The relationship that keeps its members united cannot be objectivated: it is Life itself.

We cannot do without transcendence. There must be something above or outside the nation, yet not something of the political order, since we would then have a new empire, a new Christendom. What is needed is a *new* myth, not a new form of the old one. Here is where the metapolitical comes into play. Some signs of it can already be glimpsed on the horizon.

I would like to stress once again that the present-day crisis is due to the fact that we do not have any far-reaching human project; we are still without a unifying myth. Civilization, culture, the empire, technocracy, and even the economic market have provided some nations with a certain unifying myth; practically speaking, however, this myth cannot embrace the whole planet, but only the technocratized elite.

¹⁹ R. Panikkar, *Patriotismo y cristianidad* (Madrid: Rialp, 1961).

Three Signs on Our Contemporary Horizon

Politics was first centered on the *polis*, and later on the State. Today we have a very different situation, because the real political challenges are being played out on a worldwide scale and with the omnipresence of the economic dimension. Thinking and acting solely on the level of the *polis* and the State will not help us very much to overcome the current crisis of our civilization, or show us alternative ways out. This does not mean we have to abandon the *polis* and the regions as privileged places for political activity, but that we should study the present situation carefully in order to understand its tendencies.

The twentieth century has witnessed three major upheavals on a worldwide scale:

- The ecological crisis
- The monetization of the economy
- The technocratic empire

For each of these three fields I attempt to present the necessary conditions for overcoming them, and these I believe should focus on the three following principles:

- The *ecosophical* revelation
- The demonetization of the economy
- Emancipation from technology

The Ecosophical Revelation

At this point we should perhaps review the details and the examples regarding the grave situation that threatens the survival of the planet today—a situation caused by the current economic and manufacturing system, the logic of which is bringing about the destruction of nature through disproportionate exploitation and the ever-increasing pollution of the Earth.

This extreme situation obviously calls out for immediate solutions geared to amending and solving the problems of ecological destruction that we are being confronted with so dramatically. However, this is proving to be totally insufficient, because what is necessary is getting to the *kosmological* [sic]²⁰ roots of the problem. If we do not change the vision of the world that we have been given by modern scientific *kosmology*, in fact, we will never overcome this crisis. We need a new ecological awareness, which I have taken the liberty of calling *ecosophy*.²¹

I coined the word "ecosophy" to describe a new level of the ecological awareness that is developing among us. The term "ecology," as the *logos* of the *oikos*, still alludes to an "exploitation" of the Earth's "resources" (though undoubtedly more rational), but it does not suggest the change of mentality that is indispensable if humanity is to survive.

The English word "ecosystem," meanwhile, which has been in use since 1935, aims to emphasize the harmony of the "ecological system." This certainly represents a big step in the right direction, but the word itself, which invokes exploitation, resources, needs, development, and so on, suggests that the underlying cosmology remains unaltered. Just as today we understand that Man not only *has* a body but *is* also a body, we must go back to the ancient wisdom that tells us that Man not only *lives* on the Earth but *is* earth. This is in harmony

²⁰ "Kosmology" regards the universe itself, while cosmology deals with the doctrines relating to it. (Editor's note.)

²¹ See *Ecosofia: la nuova saggezza. Per una spiritualità della terra* (Assisi: Cittadella, 1993).

with our previous intuition: Man not only lives in the city but he *is polis*. Man is earth, but the Earth is also us.

Ecosophy has the role of revealing. It reveals to us that the Earth, like ourselves, is limited, finite, and that we have a close relationship with it, a constitutive and therefore mutual relationship. This is both new and ancient wisdom. Concerning our problem, ecosophy reveals that the borders of States are artificial and not natural; that pollution requires no passport; that the ozone in the atmosphere is not subject to the sovereignty of a single State; that the clouds are messengers of love (as poets have told us since Kalidasa) but also bring acid rain. In short, it reveals to us that so-called sovereignty, even territorial, is fictitious. It shows us the interdependence of the world. Sovereign States collapse. Border controls become useless. A new model must be conceived.

In addition to this, ecosophy also reveals to us that the region (*χώρα*), the space, the bioregion, as it is being rediscovered today, and the land on which Man lives, together form a cosmotheandric Whole. The *chóra*, in fact, is the cosmo-region, the country, as distinct from the city. The *chóra* is not an empty space (i.e., unoccupied, which would be *κενόν*), nor just any place (which would be *τόπος*), but rather the vital placement of something, especially a person (remaining in or occupying one's own place). *Politiké chóra* is the *ager publicus*, where Man forges his destiny in harmonious polarity with his private life (in the *oikos*). The "sacred places" of the Amerindians, Israelites, Muslims, and many others are not there because of a whim, and therefore they cannot be changed—as happened, for example, with the natives in Papua and other places.

Ecosophy also refers to the wisdom of the Earth: a subjective genitive that reveals to us that the Earth itself is wise, that it has a wisdom, and that Man is precisely the carrier, the organ, we might say, of this wisdom—that is, of course, providing he does not pull up his own roots, and providing he realizes that wisdom is a gift and not an artificial construction. Man is the mediator between heaven and Earth, as many traditions teach us. The metapolitical also has a cosmic role to play.

The Monetary Revolution

The greatest power in the contemporary world, that which dominates and conditions politics, is undoubtedly the economy. Though the word derives from *oiko-nomia*, today the concept of economy no longer refers to the *nomos* (order and law) of the *oikos* (human home), but represents the monetary empire, the glorification of the Goddess Juno, one of whose epithets is *moneta*, or "coin." The modern economy represents *mammonology*, if not actually *mammonolatry*.²²

The economy has always played an indispensable role in the life of peoples, but it did not used to be the only driving force of civilization. It was subordinate to other more ideological and also spiritual factors. The Spaniards became rich with the conquest of America, but Spain became poor and soon lost its empire; in those days economic planning, with the supreme rationalism of modern times, did not exist.

²² I cannot resist the temptation to cite this curious phrase—"Moneta Christi homo est" [Man is Christ's coin]—by St. Augustine, following Tertullian and commenting on the famous passage of Mt 20:21 (*Sermon* 90.10). The context, however, comes from another sermon: *Caesaris imago in nummo est, Dei imago in te est* [Caesar's image is on a coin, God's image is in you] (*Sermon* 113A.8). Before Constantine, Christians evidently followed an almost dual interpretation of the evangelical text: they give to Caesar what is owed to him. When Christianity becomes the official religion, Caesar himself belongs to God, and he also is subject to God.

Whatever we may think of this, the fact remains that the tendency of markets to expansionism has lost its homeostasis because of the influence of technocracy on commerce. This fact, along with the ecological issues, breaks down the borders all over the planet. The Amazonian region has ecological repercussions throughout the world, but the economic profit of the Amazon is difficult to control in a purely economic market. Should countermeasures be adopted to prevent India from having six hundred million cars, since this is the quantity the country ought to have if it reached the same level as the United States? Should we hope that Indians never have the degree of economic power needed to buy them? From an ecological point of view, the pollution caused by a car is fifteen times greater than that produced by a child. It is also cheaper to bring a child into the world than to build a car. It has been nearly half a century now since I first proposed the demonetization of culture.²³

What I would like to emphasize here is simpler. The economic empire, like the ecological issue, is transnational. Individual States can no longer control the internal dynamics of currency. Banks are no longer under their control. As regards multinational companies, though we are still poorly informed we have sufficient information to realize that they represent supranational powers, and the sovereign State, therefore, becomes an anachronism. If I am not mistaken, titles that include the word "world" are granted to one Bank, to sports competitions, and to a few "scientific" congresses.

It is clear that the contemporary Western world (and by "Western" I am not referring merely to a geographic category) is saturated with a pan-economic ideology. This ideology has managed to pervade and infiltrate everything. Time is money, and so are work and prestige. Art needs money, as do science, education, and nourishment. The "vow of poverty" also needs money; even such an antieconomic factor as the Christian gospel needs money. The first step toward an intercultural economy would be to recognize this pan-economical ideology and begin a global process of demonetization: of values, of culture in general, and even of the economy.

Just as some people claim there should be demilitarized areas, so we should begin to demonetize values. I know of one example of a demonetized culture: Nagaland. For the Naga people food (rice) is not monetized, it has no market value; it cannot be bought or sold in any way, as it is simply distributed among the households through a very sophisticated system. The result is that no one worries because there is enough rice for all. Likewise, houses also are neither bought nor sold, and there is no speculation over land. Trading is a punishable crime. Houses are not negotiable, like human bodies, of which they are considered to be an extension. Today, unfortunately, with the appearance of modern culture, houses are beginning to be bought and sold, at least outside the villages. I have investigated in all parts and at all levels, and I have been assured that there are no mental illnesses, such as depression, paranoia, schizophrenia, and so on—although there are other kinds of diseases, such as cirrhosis, which can be due to excessive alcohol consumption. We do not have to pay to breathe, but the people of Nagaland do not even have to pay for food or a home. It is possible to live without this burden and this worry.

Yet this happens not only in a certain part of India. In many rural areas of Europe it would be an insult to pay for time dedicated, except where industry or machines make us aware of the profitable or saleable character of time. To pay a favor back with money is the equivalent of an insult. The English language has also made clear-cut distinctions between honoraria, stipends, emoluments, fees, gratuities, recompenses, and salaries.

²³ R. Panikkar, "Seed-Thoughts in Cross-Cultural Studies," *Monchanin* 8 (1975): 1-73; and the essays "Alternatives to Modern Culture" and "Cross-Cultural Economics," *Interculture* 77 (1982).

Western socialism wants poor people to have access to medical care, legal assistance, and enough food, but it cannot or does not dare to abolish the economic burden of paying doctors, lawyers, and food manufacturers at the capitalistic market price. Our problem is far more deep-rooted. It is not a question of reorganizing the society, but rather giving life to a new civilization, a demonetized culture. This is not a utopian dream, seeing that what I am suggesting is not the total suppression of the market economy or of money, but simply that the larger part of human values be placed out of direct reach of the power of money.

Emancipation from Technology

We have already seen in the first chapter how we are currently immersed in what I call the technocratic empire. This empire knows no State borders and is now spread more or less throughout the world. Yet as well as being geographical, its conquest is also spiritual. We cannot make an abstraction of this reality but we must go beyond it, because it is leading us to an ecological, cultural, and spiritual catastrophe. This does not mean we should adopt an attitude of violent or dialectic confrontation with technology—which, in any case, would be doomed to failure (technocrats are the most powerful, and generally the most intelligent people), but rather of true emancipation from the influence of the technological civilization on human life.

This form of emancipation cannot ignore the status quo of a world that is so heavily "technologized" both in body and mind. It can be achieved not by destroying the technocratic system but by deconstructing it, and this cannot be done by putting up artificial barriers against the technological thrust. Besides, not even dictatorship in any form would succeed in stopping it; it would take a power greater than technological power. The remedy would be worse than the disease.

Neither can deconstruction be carried out through forms of negative asceticism. Motivation would be lacking. Here it is not a matter of backtracking the course of history or belittling the positive achievements of mankind.

Nor is it a question of stemming the flow of human creativity or suppressing the joy of living and undervaluing the quality of life. On the contrary, it is about the true flourishing of Man and his unique contribution to the genuine cosmotheandric adventure of the universe.

This emancipation can only be carried out by starting from a serious conversion (*meta-noia*) of the technologized world, through a profound meditation on Man's current state of anxiety. The encounters (which today are unavoidable) of the technological world with wisdom of the various religious traditions and cultures may be the beginning of a dialogue between cultures and technology. This dialogue will only be *dialogical* if there is mutual trust between the different movements that are already advancing toward the liberation of Man. These encounters should not seek to resolve technological problems, but study the fundamental issues of human life.

Today the climate is favorable. The inferiority complex of many cultures is disappearing, at least in part, as is the superiority complex of the Western civilization (though it is not only a prerogative of Westerners). War—which is directly carried out by technology—has caused over a hundred million deaths, and we know that technology is also indirectly responsible for the death of countless others through demographic, nutritional, and other unbalances. The constant threat of nuclear war and the destruction of the planet, apart from all the other wars and in spite of the end of the Cold War, hangs over all our heads. These major facts and justified fears have awakened a part of mankind to the current situation. We are again asking ourselves the same question that Man has asked since the days of the *Upanisads*: the question

of Being and Non-Being. Today this question is inevitable, not only from an individual but also from a collective point of view.

I would not like to give the impression that I am defending the ancient *kosmologies*, which today are outdated. My criticism is of the technological world, and the fact that it is suffocating Man. In proposing emancipation from technology I am suggesting that we leave the technological cosmos, free ourselves from the kosmology of a merely historical world, governed by mechanical laws; I am proposing that we broaden our human horizons. I am not advocating a return to an ancient world, which was no less fierce and rigid than that of the present-day. I am not suggesting that we alienate ourselves, escape and take refuge in an imaginary world of fairy tales. The new universe is still to emerge. This is why I concentrate on criticizing the technological world.

Here I identify more with the poet than the philosopher (though the two go hand in hand). The poets of today are the ones who have the task of writing a *Cosmotheandric Comedy*.

One of the most urgent tasks that has to be undertaken today is that of finding new structures that are human-oriented rather than dehumanizing—hence the importance of "trial and error" on the level of practice.²⁴

²⁴ See R. Panikkar, "L'émancipation de la technologie," in R. Vachon, ed., *Alternatives au développement* (Montreal: Centre Interculturel Monchanin, 1988), 293–313, for practical suggestions on how to proceed with this emancipation from technology, arranged into four groups: becoming aware, distinction between job and work, revaluation of handicrafts, and new wisdom.

THE DISCOVERY OF THAT WHICH IS METAPOLITICAL

To embrace the ambit of that which is metapolitical, as we propose to do, also obligates us to embrace the major problems that are linked to it. These should not only be treated with humility and sound judgment, but they also must not be avoided. To propose corrections and reforms, to demand more honesty on the part of members of parliament, and to denounce the arms race are all signs of the awareness that a change is needed, yet all this remains superficial and does not reach the heart of the matter; we are faced with something more profound and disturbing. I could preach a more honest democracy and justify myself by proving that my hands are clean, but when I delve deep down to the center of my life, I become aware that my ideas cannot arise from me unless I am prepared for a *metanoia*, a conversion, a radical transformation that leads to harmony between what I say and what I am and that my words are the true expression of what I think—in the sense of thinking and not of calculating or explaining.

Authority and Power

We have already alluded to the difference between *uctoritas* and *potestas* in saying that the empire or Christendom is based mainly on authority, that is, on the faith that man has in this idea of empire or Christendom. This is the myth that is accepted. Yet there is also the great temptation, on the part of the empire, to base itself on strength and power. The discovery of that which is metapolitical is connected to the conviction that power and authority are basically inseparable. Therefore, this distinction needs to be rendered more explicit. It is important, as it represents the surmounting of the mortal dichotomy between body and soul, material and spiritual, human and divine. The life of society cannot be maintained by force. The principle of self-determination of peoples is based on this surmounting. Force, on its own (power), cannot, in the long run, maintain the cohesion of peoples. The "social contract" must be voluntary.

Again I defend the *via media*, the a-dualist path between monism and dualism. We must distinguish between authority and power. Not acknowledging the difference between them would make us stray into old and even modern superstitious forms of fideism; but separating them would lead to the destruction of the weakest, that is, to a new kind of monism, preceded by fierce battles to affirm supremacy.

Authority is a beginning of cohesion, which differs from power. I shall go even further by advancing a hypothesis for which we need to go back to the sixth millennium BCE, during the period of the birth of patriarchy. As a working hypothesis, I think the origin of war stems from this period. War is certainly not a natural phenomenon. Animals do not have wars. It is

a cultural phenomenon, yet it is not encountered in all cultures. We have to ascertain which forms of culture incline toward war.

To remain within the Western context, I would like to quote Cicero's definition of philosophy: *cultura animi* (culture/cultivation of the spirit). Surely it is not this kind of culture that could incite war. Considering the seriousness of the current situation, we should ask ourselves if, throughout the course of time, there has not been any deterioration at the core of the culture that has driven us to it, or even if this civilization rests on a mistaken conception. The study of the transition of culture to civilization, that is to say, from agricultural life to urban life, and also the "passage" from pre-neolithic times to patriarchy, could perhaps serve as stepping-stones to guide our investigation.

To maintain themselves, cities need a stricter "political" power than that of a culture of man and nature based on the tribe. But when this power loses its authority, the city then has to depend on force alone. I think there is a certain relationship between father and power on one hand, and mother and authority on the other; but this issue would need to be studied deeply and in great detail.

The urban agglomeration is not self-sufficient; it must make some raids, now and again, to meet its needs, for food provisions; there have to be all kinds of provisions; including making provisions for fresh air, countryside landscapes, and so on, by means of the weekend exodus from large urban areas.¹ Cities have to be protected by walls (or by means of money). Specialization is a necessity for human life, but it is the cause of rifts, which can lead to destruction.

The city, as we have said before, is made up of a cluster of houses. The *vicus*, the city neighborhood, is a grouping of *vicini*, "neighbors," in the same way the city is a confederation of citizens; both words mean that the individual is not self-sufficient and that man cannot attain his fullness from within a closed circle. The balance can sway in both directions: that of proliferation—the city grows anarchically, like cancer, and it becomes a *megapolis* (even if it is called a "global village"); or that of closure: the city folds in upon itself, becoming isolated and pretending to be synonymous for that which is human—as the word "civilized" indicates (from *civis*). We should broaden our horizons!

The difference between power and authority is expressed by the very words themselves. "Power" means capacity to do something. Power resides in me, I am more powerful than others if I can do more things than them, if I am stronger and have more capacities; I am the holder of power. I have power. Power is "us": the individual, group, state . . . in relationship with "you," over whom we exercise our power.

In contrast, the word "authority" stems from *auctus, augeo* ("that which makes things grow"); authority is endowed, conferred, recognized. Being simply as I am, others recognize something in my person, my actions; my words have a special value for them. Age, spiritual value, wisdom, knowledge, or wealth are many other factors that establish authority. But it is always conferred by others. One is vested with authority by others; it inspires respect and trust: it is what allows those in whom it has been recognized to counsel with the authority of a leader. Prestige, for instance (leaving aside its etymology *prae-stringere*), is derived from authority. "Prestige," as with the German word *Ansehensmacht*, would be an inadequate translation of the word "authority." Authority is not a *Macht* in the sense of power—although in German they make a slight distinction between *mögen* in the sense of *vermögen* (to succeed, to influence) and *können* (to be able to).

¹ Take into account this significant fact: whereas at the beginning of the last century the urban population represented 14 percent of the total population of the planet (1.619 billion in 1900), now it is roughly 50 percent (6.260 billion in the year 2000). In 1989 it was already 45 percent.

The Greek word *ἐξουσία*, often used in the Gospels, means "authority" and also "power," "facility," and also "liberty," "entitlement," along with "splendor" or "radiance." It has a peculiar origin: composed of the preposition *ἐξ* (which frequently means the result of an action) and the verb "to be" (that which has being, substance, and properties). *Exousia* literally means "having the necessary strength from which to draw one's resources" in the material and spiritual sense of the expression. There has to be a triple distinction made between the intrinsic capacity of the subject (the ability that arises from its being); an extrinsic power, coming from factors of the order of having and not of being (money is the most "powerful," most modern example); and authority which the subject deserves and has been conferred by others. In those in whom authority is acknowledged, others can see the existence of a force that enables them to grow. The authority comes from God, according to many religions, because it is He who makes everything grow²—from within, obviously. A priest is ordained, a king is crowned, and the title of doctor is awarded to a scholar. They are vested with authority. Yet all those vested with authority can lose it if they do not show themselves to be worthy of it. They can retain a certain power, but do not enjoy, in the eyes of others, the same authority. Science confers authority. Scientists exercise authority in their own domain, whereas technocrats only have power.

The great temptation, in all fields (e.g., religion, science, politics, or family), is to abuse authority through accumulated power, or to concentrate on power alone, as modern science has done since the time of Francis Bacon.

The institutionalization of political power bestows authority, yet the latter does not totally depend on institutionalization. Authority also demands a certain right. A "de facto state" can hold a certain power. Only the "rule of law" has authority, but power and authority cannot be totally separated. All power for the very reason of being so is visible, and this visible appearance implies, as far as others are concerned, a certain acknowledgment and, as such, it demands authority. And vice versa, all kinds of authority are based on a certain power recognized by others. It would be interesting to study, as if it were a chemical equation, the balance between power and authority and the oscillations in one direction or the other depending, for instance, on the social classes, or the civil or military regimes. Britain still enjoys a certain amount of authority in India, which has nothing to do with its power. The United States, on the other hand, has more power than authority.

We need at this point to cite the juridical distinction made by the Romans, above all during the Republic, between *auctoritas* and *potestas*. The latter was the executive power; it was a coercion of royal and legal force. *Potestas* was a coercive power; it resided in the judiciary; it was exercised by magistrates, particularly consuls, whereas authority resided with the people and the Senate. The people were the legislators, the Senate being the organ that ratified, counseled, and gave the force of law, and therefore authority, to the resolutions of the people and magistrates. History shows us, without lacking in irony, that the Roman senators had authority as long as they were rich (*exousia!*). Later, the loss of their wealth made them more vulnerable.

The current democratic political system acknowledges that authority lies with the people. The people delegate it to those whom they think capable of its exercise. By conferring authority on them, they are given the reins of power. The difficulty consists, these days, in making this process reversible once it is discovered that power eludes the people's authority, as it has been transmitted to a technocratic system that has freed itself of all dependence, toward both the

² See 1 Cor 3:6.

masses and politicians. Voting is an act of trust in manifestos (and politicians) and not a judgment (of the issues and the means). Common citizens are unaware of the complications of the technocratic state's "mechanisms." Even politicians are generally badly informed: it is too vast, too complicated, too difficult!

The political issue, in concrete, resides precisely in authority-power dialectics. Democracy is the art of managing power on behalf of authority. If the practice of this art does not succeed in achieving its aims, it becomes the degeneration of that which is political into brute force. I can see a danger in this order, not only with the present-day nuclear potential, but also with modern technocracy. A common soldier could argue over Napoleon's strategy with a certain knowledge of the cause. He cannot do it with Schwarzkopf's;³ there is no way of knowing the technological intricacies. Swiss citizens can still take part in decisions relating to the government of their canton; but if the field is that of the World Bank, any kind of active participation is denied them; in fact, it would take them years of specialization to be "initiated" into its functioning. Bureaucrats are inaccessible to dialogue; technocratic bureaucracy has its own autonomy, which even "initiates" are not always able to know sufficiently. Authority cannot be dispensed with, yet these days we live beneath the reign of technocracy: authority resides in machines.

An excursus into religious science could be useful to us here. Since R. H. Codrington and Van der Leeuven, among others, one hears it said that the first experience of the Divine is that of power: *Die Macht ist das religiöse Urphänomen* (Power is the primordial religious phenomenon): *Mana, orenda, arunkulta*, God . . . is the Almighty, and the Jewish-Christian-Islamic tradition only reinforces this idea (despite the paradoxes of Jesus in the Gospels, which seem to say the opposite). From here on, there is a lack of distinction between power and authority. They coincide in God. When the State is seen as being the representative of Divinity, it maintains—for those who believe—authority and power. When the State becomes desacralized it must rely more upon power. It is only too well known that, in contrast to an immutable God, the people (a surrogate of the Divinity) can be manipulated—and all the more so, when they let themselves be caught up in the game of democracy. So, can we conceive of politics without power?

There is also a mistake in language that has forced the meaning of the word "power," attributing to it such different realities as force, coercion, dynamism, domination, authority, glory, capacity, potency, facility, irradiation, attraction, resistance, persuasion, dignity, pace, energy, and many other ways of exercising *influence* over others.

Let us simplify matters: power is the strength of *logos*, of rationality, the weight of facts that reason has led us to acknowledge as such. Authority is the strength of *mythos*, that which is accepted, of what one believes, the weight of the ideal that is presented to us as such. Wisdom consists in knowing how to harmonize them. The participation of politics stems from this wisdom.

In Search of an Alternative

Here, we face the important and difficult issue of knowing whether there exists a possible alternative to the present situation. These days there is a certain consensus on one point: it is expressed in everyday language by saying that "the System does not work." This "System" could be interpreted as the technocratic complex and its variants in the capitalist and ex-communist worlds, along with nonaligned satellite states, which have a mixed economy and regimes. This System derives from an underlying cosmology that supports the political structure of

³ Norman Schwarzkopf Jr., the US general who led the operations in the First Gulf War.

the present-day world, as it is represented, for example, by the dominant socioeconomic ideology of these states. I am not referring directly to political ideologies but rather to the political structure, or to its infrastructure, if you wish: the myth of the modern state being the essential sphere of that which is political.

I never tire of insisting that we should situate ourselves in a proper perspective from which to embrace the Western experience of the past five centuries. The European experiment has left the mark of its influence on the world scene. Let us not forget that a century ago, Europe politically dominated most of the world.

One speaks of the Roman Empire, of medieval Christendom, of the pagan Renaissance, or of the Age of Enlightenment; our time is the economic and economicistic period par excellence, or rather, the financial Era of humanity. The danger that threatens us is total bankruptcy. There is no need here to name the authorities and wide range of organizations that assure us, if the current civilization does not change radically, the world will not survive more than fifty years.⁴

This said, opinions differ on the possible alternative. One opinion group wishes for more or less rigorous and drastic reforms: the System does not work, but it could be made to work: adequate technology, shrewder customs policies, human rights, ecological legislation, and so on. This is the only path accessible to the United Nations and official organizations. A second, smaller group thinks it is imperative to acknowledge the impracticality of the System and search for an alternative. Mahatma Gandhi's ideas could be an example of this. The former group's strength corresponds to the latter group's weakness. The opponents of the System come from very different ideologies, from what are known as "terrorists"—who, for differing reasons, act with varying degrees of violence to overturn the System and replace it with a different regime—to "greens," pacifists, and others, who, in their own way, put up a resistance to the System. The "reformist's" strength resides in the fact that we cannot make a clean slate of history, nor of the current situation. We cannot start from scratch; we need to start from the place we are in. The attraction of the second group for an alternative corresponds to the difficulty of the first group to launch *real* reforms. To date, every fundamental reform has turned out to be ineffective, and has only prolonged the agony of a system that in the long run is univable. We are in a blind alley.

Fifty years or so ago, after the shock of the Second World War, it was believed that decolonization, democracy, and the socioeconomic-technocratic complex (for instance, the Marshall Plan) would favor a certain welfare for the whole of humanity. These days, we realize psychologically, culturally, and historically, including from the ecological, economic, and technological viewpoint, that the current System only offers solutions to 30 percent of humanity.⁵ The famous phrase "What is good for General Motors is good for the United States" has been extrapolated. Hence what is good for the United States shows a model that other countries should imitate. Now, to quote only one fact: poor countries are becoming

⁴ There is an immense bibliography on the subject. It is no longer the Green Parties, left wingers, philosophers, and poets who say it: there is almost total unanimity, and science is the first to state that we cannot play at *Mephistopheles*. See information issues of magazines such as *Cultural Survival* (Cambridge, Massachusetts), *Papeles para la paz* (Madrid), or *Sanctuary Magazine* (Bombay).

⁵ In March 1992, it was possible to write with realism, "The voice of the poor will increasingly be heard in the world, in which, soon, the 'guaranteed' will amount to 700 million and the 'sidelined,' more than 7 billion" (I. Ramonet, "Les rébellions à venir," *Le Monde Diplomatique*). And the astounding comment to be made is: this minority does not wish to give up their prerogatives or privileges and are ready for a "final solution" for all the others. Birth control is defended without, however, any wish to control technocratic growth (five million new cars sold in Germany in 1991 alone).

increasingly poor and rich countries increasingly rich, not because of any wish for it to be thus, but rather because this phenomenon is inherent to the system.⁶

The situation is critical. If we commit ourselves to the system, albeit to reform it, we become "collaborators," making the necessary radical transformation more difficult. On the other hand, no system tolerates being brought down. We can, for example, try to find more humane ways of helping the so-called Third World to "develop itself," but it will be done so that the aid given is situated within the very structures of the countries that supply it. Furthermore, if the help is not profitable for the First or Second Worlds, they will not get involved in this kind of "charity" enterprise. From the Third World's point of view, aid necessarily leads to greater dependence of the country in need on those providing aid. But if there is no collaboration with the System, one becomes isolated, treated as a "dropout," a parasite, or perhaps a sterile purist. There is not even the strength of example, since its testimony is not acknowledged. Monks can abandon the world as long as the world does not abandon them. If the latter abandons the monks, their testimony vanishes, their seclusion becomes isolation. Obviously, this does not mean one must act to "amaze" others by the results. It only means the simplicity of the dove is not compatible with the slyness of the snake.⁷ One should be *within* the system without, at the same time, belonging *to* the system, "in the world," but not "of the world," in polarity with it, seeking to transform it, persuade it, or convince it despite the ambivalence of these words). A universal reconciliation is required, not a unilateral impoverishment.

These days, much is said about "alternatives." I want to use this word, but with a precise meaning. Evidently, it does not concern successive alternation. The word, as we commonly use it these days, meaning the substitution of a system of life or a project of civilization to replace another, is an Anglicism. It does not matter. There can be an alternation of political parties in government. Because of this they are called "parties" (from *pars*, a part) as they do not pretend to be the whole. But is it realistic to conceive a radical alternative to the contemporary political structure?

At the outset, the alternative should be a "u-topia" in its literal sense: it has no *tόπος*, "place," since its place is neither that of the System nor is it one outside it. I must underline that the alternative being sought here would not consist of an alternation of Russians or Chinese with Americans or vice versa. The search for an alternative should be, first of all, a spiritual journey, as it is only the spirit that can overcome any *de facto* situation; it could be said that it is the organ of transcendence.

Is there an alternative? How could we ever know this if it does not exist in reality? And here, the discourse on transcendence is not added on. What we do know is that the search for an alternative is a categorical imperative. I would rather say that *various* possibilities of alternatives should be sought. There is no *one* alternative, but rather, there are alternatives, all of them being provisional ones, as the human condition is thus.⁸

I wish to emphasize some important points.

⁶ To give just one example: It is said that Brazil in the 1990s is a prosperous country. On the other hand Brazilians find themselves in a worse situation than ever. And we are not only talking about the atrocities that are committed in the Amazon, or those that affect the aborigines of the area. I restrict myself to pointing out the indifference of the "developed" world regarding the 12 million children who vegetate, scrape a living, deal drugs, play, suffer, die, and are killed by the police and other "security agents" in the "opulent" cities of the country.

⁷ Mt 10:16.

⁸ I refer to my cited article "Alternatives to Modern Culture," and "Développement endogène," *Interculture* 84 (1984): 34–64.

There Is No Alternative within the System

This tautology expresses the actual situation well. All systems allow for and even desire reform, yet they are not ready to be eliminated by another system. Only through violence does an empire take over from another one.

The impossibility for an *internal* alternative is something more than the logical somersault that consists in saying that the alternative to the system does not belong to the latter. This impossibility stems from the fact that the present situation, founded on the total elimination of transcendence, makes any alternative impossible. For it, any alternative would be like committing suicide. In the modern system, individuals can believe in God or in Gods, be religious, and lead a pious lifestyle, yet the System (which can either respect religious beliefs of individuals or not) does not need the Sacred, it can do without it; the Divine is a superfluous hypothesis. The System's myth is scientific and technocratic; it does not deny the existence of the "supernatural," but it demands its own autonomy within the "natural." This very distinction between what is natural and supernatural becomes useful as it avoids the religious being incorporated into the System: the existence of angels is tolerated, as long as they do not interfere with the vast industrial machine or the machinery of the State. If they want to act in the world, they must obey the second principle of thermodynamics.

In other words: the System cannot break away from its own identity; it cannot tolerate an incompatible transmutation within its own structure and for which it is not prepared. There is no Archimedean point (in the Transcendent) that allows it to achieve a true transformation. An absolute monarchy can accept that the order of heaven has been taken away from it and abdicate its power to make way for a radical change, a mutation. A rational system, like scientific technocracy, can correct its own defects, even modify its methods and admit reform, but it cannot do away with rationality, upon which it has been founded. Given that the System has no point of transcendence, it cannot accept an alternative.⁹

There Is No Alternative outside the System

In our current situation there is not even an alternative outside the System. This is for two reasons: the first derives from the *de facto* situation of the modern world. The contemporary scientific-technocratic system (of Western origin, yet which dominates the political and cultural scene in a world divided into states and distributed in various blocs of influence), has invaded the planet in such a way that no geographic or historic region can offer any alternative. Historic empires succeeded one another. There were alternatives, for instance, in the sixteenth century when the Dutch, British, and French Empires succeeded the Spanish Empire. But if the American Empire eliminates the Soviet Empire, there is no alternative because the System's structure remains the same. The System transcends political regimes of states. There is no visible successor to the modern scientific-technocratic System. After the disintegration of the Soviet Empire, this is still more evident. The modern technocratic System has no rival. There is still nothing that can replace it. This is where the novelty lies and perhaps our epoch's possibility of mutation. There is a newly born yet constantly increasing awareness that the present System, common to all blocs in the world, is now exhausted. And this is not only because of a lack of raw materials, but

⁹ The case of the Algerian government (1991) is not the only one that did not accept the majority results that had voted against the status quo; the United States did the same, ignoring The Hague's Court of Justice's vote that condemned the armed aggression against the people of Nicaragua—as did Israel, when it rejected the United Nations' practically unanimous decision on the issue of Palestine.

also because the spirit that animated the basic human attitude typical of this lifestyle has died. The myth has collapsed.

These days, for instance, everyone can know that (without counting wars) the probability of a great atomic catastrophe within five hundred years, due only to some mechanical or human error, is indubitable. Most experts speak of less than three hundred years. And by a "catastrophe" one should understand the destruction of millions of people, a true atomic winter, and the disappearance of life at a continental scale. Therefore, also from this standpoint, it can easily be seen that adjustments and superficial reforms just prolong the agony, but do not lead to any solution. As regards sources of energy, the data we have are equally alarming: oil, forests, and coal are all limited materials, and atomic energy—without taking into account uncertainties and risks—demands, in its control and production, the expenditure of too much energy for it to be profitable to the planet. We find ourselves faced with harsh contrasts: to grow a few acres of rice through modern technological means, fifteen times more energy (calories) have to be employed than would be obtained from the rice harvest. The acceleration of technology does not allow the recycling of natural cycles.

From the economic point of view, let us consider the budget debt of the richest and most powerful country on Earth. This amount is higher than what citizens of the United States can earn in three years. And so, it is growth or death. Now, in a closed system, growth of one side means impoverishment of the other. The easy answer to this dilemma, that within a hundred years humanity will have found safer economic procedures, does not stand up to the facts. Furthermore, it appears as a substitute for Christian belief: the transference of hope into personal, cosmic salvation, in a naïve and alienating pseudo-trust in a horizontal future; and above all, it comes from the mentality that has led us to our current situation—and that we will not be able to overcome. It is the mentality of progress, the mentality that leads to not *solving* problems, that is, not "dissolving" them, but rather pushing them on into the future. Instead of provoking their dissolution, an antidote is sought, a neutralizer, a stronger opponent in the advance (in the "pro-gress") and never a return, with healthy reflection, to ask oneself if it would not be better to stop, change direction, and repent. The wild attacks of the cavalry were opposed by the artillery, the threat of bombs known as "conventional" is opposed by atomic bombs, terrorism is fought by the police, and microbes are destroyed by other stronger substances.

Within this more "objective" reason, the second more "subjective" reason is implicitly contained, which we shall immediately present. The most serious problem does not arise from the necessity for an exterior change in the world and the exterior forms of lifestyles. The most profound issue is that we are dealing with a structure of thought, of a fundamental attitude before reality, of atrophy that impedes other experiences at the core of this very reality. A large part of mankind, which is most influenced by modernity, has hardly any language to express what some, with a touch of lucidity, would like to be able timidly to communicate. It is well known that the essence of technology (substantially different from *technie*, a fact I am very interested in stressing¹⁰) does not reside in machines but rather in a basic attitude before that which is Real. The typical problem of technocracy is not a technological problem (it cannot be resolved by new or better technology); it is a human-anthropological problem, that is, religious. Here is where the challenge of that which is metapolitical comes in.

But can we consider an alternative if we are unable to formulate one? Here I return to my conviction that, in the present world, only the mystics will survive. Without a perception of this third dimension of Reality, with which mystics put us in contact, and which

¹⁰ See my "L'émancipation de la technologie," *Interculture* 85 (1984): 22-37.

supports the sensory and intelligible dimensions, that which is real would be no more than pure abstraction—sensory or intelligible.¹¹

I only wish to stress the following: our purely mental efforts are not much use to us when we are searching for an alternative of this kind. Hence the fundamental importance of the contribution of artists and that of different cultures.¹² Without the active participation of both, no alternative is thinkable or realizable. Without insisting any further I will only observe that the System is condemned to failure. There is no longer a Bolívar, "deliverer," nor "liberator."

But let us return to our subject: the solution does not lie outside the System. Nor, as we have already said, is it found within the System; nevertheless, the latter is indispensable and we cannot do without it. We cannot act as though it did not exist, look down upon it, condemn it, and act as if technocracy, multinationals, and the United Nations did not exist. It has to be taken into account, and we must be conscious of the power that the System has. There is, first of all, a strategic reason that theorists tend to overlook. An example can help us demonstrate this. In India, certain socialist militants, Marxists, and some social workers keenly incite aborigines, *pariahs*, and other peasants—reduced to slavery by great landowners and exploited by usurers—to protest and even revolt. In principle, the law is on the side of the poor, but it offers no protection. The police protect, but in this context, they protect above all the interests of the wealthy and powerful. Militants have reported the injustice, but if farmers wish to survive they have to live day by day with this injustice without being able to confront it with efficient means. They have no alternative. Militants fight for them and with them, but they are a minority persecuted by the police. Solutions that could be termed Puritan are not of much use. *The System has to be lived with!*

The contemporary situation is worse than in the past because no alternative can be glimpsed. From another standpoint, it is more favorable to less violent action because there is no concrete enemy to combat; it cannot be localized. There is no tyrant to overthrow, monster to kill, no invading empire to fight against. So criticism must be intelligent. It concerns us all—we might say it crosses our path.

The System has to be lived with for three reasons. In the first place, because it exists. A second more serious reason is that it is not totally false or bad and we cannot establish ourselves as being perfect judges or truthbearers. Yet there is an even more profound motive: the System is also *us*, all of us, with no exception, and most of us form part of the System—both oppressed and oppressors, those who wish to be neutral or those who do not vote, vegetarians, and those who, in India, only wear *khādi* (hand-woven) clothes. The System should not be made into a scapegoat. I am thinking about all of us; I am talking about the System that overcomes problems of moral order in precise situations. I speak like this because the "other," the racist, the communist, the liberal, the technocrat, and also machines and megamachines are not strange to us, nor are we indifferent to them. They are not closed monads,

¹¹ See my "Man as a Ritual Being," *Chicago Studies* 16, no. 1 (1977): 5–28.

¹² The following reflection of Mircea Eliade in his diary becomes very opportune here: "Why is it that 'sages'—anthropologists, historians of religions—cannot look at the 'objects' of their study with the same passion and patience that artists look at Nature (to be more precise 'natural objects' they wish to portray)? How many things would a sage be able to see in an institution, a belief, a custom, a religious idea—if he or she observed them with concentrated attention, with disciplined sympathy, with their spiritual 'awareness' with the same fervour as artists do? Which anthropologist has looked at 'the objects' of his/her study with the fervour, concentration and intelligence of a Van Gogh or a Cézanne, beheld by a landscape, forest or a cornfield? How can one understand something like this if they do not even have the patience to contemplate it with attention?" (See Eliade [1973 and 1981], 470).

people and machines with which we have no relationship. There is a cosmic and universal solidarity both for good and for bad.

In brief, the alternative is not found in a countertechnology or an anti-System. Alternatives should be able to enter into a relationship with the System, because most of them have come from it and are to a greater or lesser degree tolerated. The attitude to take should be one of a *mahatma*: to show signs of magnanimity, to consider the issue in all its aspects and interdependences, rather than an attitude that derives from a dialectic opposition. One should be inclined to transform the situation while at the same time assimilating it, conserving one's critical sense and rebellious spirit. In a word, the system is not only an objective fact, a state of things; it is also a subjective fact, a state of life—and of thought.

And so, why still use the word "alternative," if one can see no possibility of overthrowing the system, to replace it with another? I would reply that this word can still be used because it has a subtle ambivalence.

"Alternative," in fact, does not say *aliud* or *alius* (another thing or another one); the word does not say *alienus* (belonging to another, to the foreigner). Nor does it say *alteruter* or *alterutrum* (the one or the other, in the exclusive sense). It says *alter* (the one and the other), and we use it here in its inclusive sense: both one and the other. Reality itself is "alternative"—that is, relational polarity, and not only dialectic alternation. Everything is co-implicated, and our problem refers to the most fundamental questions of existence and of life. Reality is polar, or rather it is trinitary.

This leads us directly to our second point.

The Cross-Fertilization of Cultures

We have said that the alternative we are seeking cannot be the adversary, the enemy of the System, but rather its complement, its polarity, its challenge—which presupposes its transformation, in Greek, its radical *metamorphosis*, or in more Christian language, its *conversion*, its redemption (although I use this word with reticence, Christian redemption being nothing more than a clumsy word for deification, *theosis*). The alternative consists, first of all, in acknowledging the other's right to exist—this "other," which the system tends to ignore, and which the "others" should not imitate (by ignoring the system). We are in need of both, not in the same way as states that are in principle sovereign states, whose tolerance toward others consists in limiting supremacy (through courtesy or force), but rather because we are all jointly responsible. *Esse est coesse*: "To be is to be together."

To express this in our own language: what we need is the *cross-fertilization of cultures*. For this to happen, we should know how to listen to what the other, less dominant cultures in the present-day world have to say when confronted with political problems, and their opinion of the current situation. We should know their suggestions and study them. This does not concern minor reforms, but rather the possibility of radically different answers. This dialogue could lead to mutual fertilization.

Now, interfertilization demands something more than just the superficial knowledge of other cultures. Criticism, even radical criticism of the dominant culture, is insufficient; we are not dealing with being contented by uncovering what, in the past, were the defects or virtues of others: something new has to be found. These cultures should be invited to express, to say, what they have not yet been able to say, because there has not been the opportunity and the current problems had not arisen. So that cross-fertilization comes to pass (if I can allow myself to continue with the metaphor in its most elemental sense), the two have to love each other, know each other; what is needed (and again you will excuse me) is to avoid any kind of "prophylactic" to enable, perhaps, the birth of a new being.

These prophylactics are numerous: pride, fear, mutual ignorance, privileges, contempt, and many others.

What are we seeking? What is the aim of political life? Cohabitation, being happy, the fulfillment of the human being. Politics does not consist of a simple search for means (which we are frequently led to believe), but rather the search or even the discovery of the ends that show us the way to find the pertinent means to realize them. To think that politics is restricted to the search for or implementation of means is to contemplate its manipulation within an accepted system. In an urban sprawl such as Greater Los Angeles, where 70 percent of the built-up area is occupied by roads, the most efficient means of circulation without obstructions is that some drive on the right while others drive on the left, and that there are traffic lights at crossroads and five-lane highways. Yet no one asks themselves if roads are—or are not—true means of communication, whether cities should be built in function of cars, wheels, or pedestrians. Is a true city one that, instead of being a communitarian center that favors relationships, exchanges, neighborliness, and human happiness, presents itself as a fortress of individualism?

We should first of all study the relationship between culture and politics. Real political problems do not consist of wondering which party to vote for, but rather in discovering, exchanging opinions, if political parties propose solutions, if the individual vote leads to justice, if democracy is an absolute, and other considerations. Primarily it is a question of discovering what the ends are, rather than embarking upon a discussion only concerned with the means.

I have often used words like "emancipation from technology," "transformation of the System." The difficulty lies in how to do it. I can only say this: it is by means of the cross-fertilization of cultures that we will solve the dilemma. Cultural inertia has to be overcome, and we must acknowledge that to resolve present-day human problems, no culture, religion, ideology, or tradition is self-sufficient. When a fishing boat sinks, all the other fishermen around come to the aid of men and boat. Dialogue, collaboration, and mutual trust are imperatives of contemporary humanity.

Only in an atmosphere of this kind can be discerned, deep down, solutions to the problems that the current situation presents. Let us return to our reflection over that which is political: what the *polis* was in Greece, the tribe is in Africa. If in the former, culture came first, in the latter, nature is dominant. But Greek culture was founded on ethnicity, and African nature is not divorced from a human universe. Therefore, might not tribal wisdom be able to contribute to study in depth that which is political? It should be understood that when I say "nature," in this context, I mean the *human* nature of Africans and not the abstract "nature" of ethnological arguments over the nature/culture relationship.

I would like to give another example, which is delicate and extremely complex, as the emotions concerned are embittered and the abuse horrific, but more than forty years' experience should provide us with sufficient serenity to tackle it. I am referring to the caste system in India. Since Independence, the Constitution abolished castes; they are no longer legally recognized. And yet they are probably still the most powerful social force in the Indian Republic. One should not confuse this system with the pariahs,¹³ who, although they are called—perhaps with a certain paternalism—*harijan* (people of God), they prefer to be known as *dalit* (literally "rough," "broken," "crushed"); when all is said and done, they represent another caste, numerically superior to certain "higher" castes. I would even go as far as saying that Indian civilization has traditionally participated in a triple scheme that would be the *homeomorphic equivalent* of the "*polis*": people, caste, *rājā* (local sovereign,

¹³ In the sense of "person outside the castes."

whatever their title). Here, I am not proposing a model to transform the System, nor am I at all hiding the rigidness or abuse of "casteism." I am simply pointing out that the substitution of Indian political life for a Westernized elitist capitalist system or for a socialism of classes is not the cross-fertilization that I am contemplating as a solution. Let us not forget that there are cultural genocides.

I would like to here give some points of reference on the relationship between culture and politics, to finally come to that which is metapolitical.

Politics Forms an Integral Part of Culture

We have already mentioned that politics is the manner in which public affairs are handled, that is, the art and science, the praxis and theory of that which is political. We have also described culture as the encompassing or unifying myth of a people at a given moment in time and space.

Culture and politics are interwoven. Every culture has its own politics. Culture lacking in politics is folklore. To wish for multiculturalism in a closed political unit is cultural reductionism. In more philosophical terms: the container transforms and conditions its contents. To think that a "neutral" container can allow, other different contents to develop is somewhat naïve. The container/contents relationship is not a neutral one; there is a reciprocal influence.

Basing oneself on this reciprocity, one can unmask the latent totalitarianism of the current political system that claims, as we have stressed, to be tolerant toward other cultures, as long as they accept the rules of this all-inclusive political culture that offers them hospitality. Furthermore, modern culture has specific politics. It can be talked about using grandiloquent words—which we have heard all too often—and categorizing it as individualism, democracy, world market, development, United Nations, technocracies (computers, satellites, information networks), and so on.

Culture is not something that just falls from heaven, nor is politics a human activity that operates in a vacuum. Politics is the art through which a culture forms itself; culture is the form that a society adopts stemming from specific politics—although culture and politics are also conditioned by other elements.

After these considerations we can formulate the corollary of our foregoing statement.

*There Is No Culturally Neutral Politics,
nor Is There Politics without Culture*

Not only does all politics belong to a culture and as such is inseparable from it, but all politics, assuming a culture, is the expression of the latter, and because of this gives it form. It is from the premises of a given culture that political decisions are taken; but these, once taken, can change the aspect of the culture. It is by virtue of a culture based upon the necessity of a Cartesian certainty, and from which the need of political security derives, that decisions on nuclear weapons are "freely" taken, and this politics, in turn, molds a determined culture. In consequence, there is no politics of pure means. Politics is not only a technique to favor communitarian life. And even if it were only a technique, it would not be neutral, as it pursues a specific goal on the horizon of a given culture.

Moreover, political activity cannot be reduced to the simple selection of means for the common good. Rather, it arises from both the search for, and critical analysis of, this same common good for which it also assumes responsibility. The consequences of this are very serious: to wish to install a world political system without cultural uniformity makes no

sense. And wishing to impose a single cultural model represents the elimination of all other cultures, an authentic cultural genocide.

Naturally, the mass media in the service of a specific policy does not wish, on principle, to impose anything. It is restricted to making propaganda. But propaganda is the art of convincing us that what is good for the organ of propaganda is equally good for everyone else. The freedom of propaganda is a political decision, which comes from a very precise and specific culture. Could propaganda be made in favor of Nazism, cannibalism, hatred, violent revolt against the state, military desertion, child rape, or slavery? Hence the strength of culture as an incorporating myth.

The most serious danger these days—following the example of the European Enlightenment and its pretensions—is to give a monopoly to *reason*, a monopoly that would entail a false dilemma: either reason (pure, dialectic, instrumental, communicative, historic, scientific, technological, etc.) or irrationalism (fanaticism, sentimentalism, superstition, fundamentalism, etc.), forgetting that this very reason is culturally situated.

The Current Quagmire

Having said all this, we find ourselves in a quagmire. We have a dominant political System that wishes to be universal, and that, in a certain sense, has managed to penetrate the political life of a large part of the world, but which at the same time, because of its success and also due to the wisdom inherent in human nature, wishes to preserve cultural pluralism. But there is no cultural pluralism without political pluralism. If different cultures are placed under the obligation to adopt a single political form, as we have already stated, culture is reduced to folklore. Each culture engenders political forms that are inherent to it. A culture without its own politics is a truncated culture. Politics relies directly on the cultural factor. Would we then have to overthrow the current political system to save other cultures? Or should cultures be condemned to a slow extinction, and hence become artificial flowers that are used to decorate the great technocratic civilization?

We are trapped on a dead-end street. How can we get out of it? It is no use fooling ourselves with vain hopes; either we adopt a single policy, and then we consecrate cultural monomorphism, or we accept cultural pluralism with different political systems.

I do not think it is worth expanding any more on the reality of this quagmire, given the evidence. The efforts at implanting a Western system in Africa and Asia and their resounding failures should have opened our eyes by now. The causes of a dictatorship in some place and a famine somewhere else can be explained. One should ask whether a situation is endemic and if it gets worse year after year. Will we continue to blindly seek answers before having perceived the nature and seriousness of the problem?

I insist upon the seriousness of the issue. Evolutionist thought—and I am referring to thought and not just the evolution of species—leads us to a cultural monomorphism of great, even cosmic, style in the fashion of Teilhard de Chardin. All together, humanity will walk in the same direction. There are certainly meanders and areas of "cultural" freedom, yet both the Omega Point and the North Star (or the one the Three Magi followed) would be visible to the whole world. This way of thinking, predominant in the West, is the result of the temporal interpretation of deconsecrated Christian eschatology. Eternity is confused with the future, and the destiny of both man and the earth is imagined as a temporal and physical eschatology. In brief, the quagmire at the core of the dominant culture is insuperable. If people believe *this* to be the only true cosmology, then there is no need to get deluded by the possibility of cultural cross-fertilization. The Big Bang will dominate everything! Yet perhaps it only represents a cosmology as relative as the others.

The Solution through Reaction

I call "solution through reaction" that which consists in procedures that react against the dominant culture through confrontation in the same terms as it, and with similar, yet antagonistic categories. They thus fall into the orbit of the culture they intended to replace. To contemplate the downfall of this political system and its replacement with another, because it leads to massive exploitation, has favored one race and is the cause of so many evils: it is neither practically feasible nor is it theoretically convincing. Ecological signs can frighten us, shake our trust in the System, and thus prepare us to consider the seriousness of the problem; but in general, ecology pertains to technical-scientific thought. Stemming from this warning, this awareness is the reason we have spoken about *ecosophy*.

We shall single out two obstacles, of different kinds, to the answers through reaction. The first is inscribed in the sphere of prudence. To overthrow the system is not practically feasible. Let us think of David and Goliath. David won once; in general it is Goliath who wins! If war with a stronger neighbor is contemplated, one must reflect a great deal before starting it,¹⁴ as a confrontation of this type may not lead to victory.

A second, much more important reason, which does not derive solely from a political strategy (in the best sense of the word), is that even if one were to win, what would be gained? Replace black with white, rich with poor, some with others? To continue fighting in the same way? We would remain in the same System, which can only subsist through the domination of one over the other. No political system, during the course of world history, has been so powerful and developed as the current one. Wishing to correct its abuses is fruit of a very praiseworthy intention, but human nature being what it is, without a qualitative leap that would project us out of the System, we would not get very far with reform. To express it in a rather more sarcastic way: if the Catholic Church were a monarchy, it would be better for the pope to live in Rome and not in Berlin or Moscow. If the wealthy must rule the world, better to be governed by liberals than the nouveau riche of tomorrow. The question is not one of changing the guard but of changing the System.

This negative solution through reaction presents a real danger: that of not overcoming the *forma mentis* of those whom we reject and fight. The reactionary anticapitalism becomes "state capitalism"; antitechnology can become another supertechnology; fighting for peace can easily become aggressive; we are well aware that, much too often, anticolonialism has become a new form of (colonialist) exploitation. Many revolutions have only served to repeat the model they had fought against, in another form, and so on and so forth.

Solution through reaction, in a very subtle way, depends upon the status quo. We become what we hate. To be able to destroy our adversary, we are obliged to use their weapons—and employing their means we fall into the structure of the System we are fighting against. In brief, what I call solution through reaction is confrontation and struggle using the same weapons as the adversary. If we do not take it to a higher level, we do no more than perpetuate the law of *karma*.

The Interlude

Should we invoke voluntary apartheid? *Fuga mundi*? Dispersion in minuscule subcultures? Secluding oneself somewhere, constituting noncontaminated islands here and there? Abandoning the world or forming small groups, disseminated communities, may initially be positive and also constitute one of the preliminary conditions for a real solution. But getting away from or becoming separated from others, retiring into small, "pure" nuclei is not a stable

¹⁴ See Lk 14:31–32.

alternative. The history of humanity has known many communities: Manichaeans, *fraticelli*, Cathars, Montanists, Jansenists, Puritans, and all kinds of secret societies. The world could not tolerate them and considered these "parasites" as being dangerous to the regime's stability.

And nevertheless, this world has its own sects and heresies. The first world, since it is more stable and powerful, can afford to tolerate them, this being the best way to make them ineffectual. As long as you are a few bothersome "dropouts," "flower children" who are irritating but do not represent a threat to public order, you will be free to set up home in the mountains of California, to live there as you wish, and even to found a "green" party. But when you begin to take a stand, become too powerful, a little dangerous, and your behavior, activities, and demands appear to be a danger that can shake the System, it will not tolerate you anymore. Everything depends on the extent to which you constitute a real threat to it.

This System needs self-defense to keep on existing. Stepping aside may be a pause, a moment of rest, of reflection, of consolidation of some positions. I have no wish whatsoever to give the impression of condemning all minority and nonconformist movements; on the contrary! Heresies have a healthy function, indispensable to the vitality of a tradition; this can be evaluated by seeing the generosity with which dissidents are tolerated. These small nuclei have far greater influence over most people than is habitually believed. Without these marginal experiences we would suffocate. Various indications lead me to think that without the "revolution" of 1968 and what nowadays is known as the *new age*, perhaps the Russian *perestroika* would not have happened so swiftly or in the same way.¹⁵ Sometimes one has to isolate oneself to be able to survive. Monks of the early centuries fled into the desert, both to save the world and themselves—and this without a trace of egoism.

My warning is a recommendation to be vigilant, that is, that the success of small industries, for instance, do not get tied up in the designs of large industry. The latter develops thanks to small industries but leaves them with restricted autonomy, which allows them to play the most important role. I have spoken elsewhere about the opposition there is between the microsociological and the macrosociological. In the current system, what is convenient to the order of the micro seems destructive in the order of the macro. This dilemma should be left behind and another medium found that is not victory or unconditional surrender. The vanquished always return. There is no need to believe in spirits or divine justice to be aware of this!

But isolation is not only practically difficult, it is impossible; in the long run, those who choose to live in isolation also suffocate. Here is a political example. One could think of Bhutan as a traditional paradise. No dictatorship, no communism, no dichotomy between politics and religion, a life following the rhythm of nature, not the accelerated and nervous pace of modernity, no consumer society nor sprawling built-up areas—it has a population of roughly one million. Yet the people are beginning to be tempted by the "apple" of modernity. They do not see this apple as being negative; rather they see the positive and rosy side: individual freedom, hygiene, critical spirit, comfort, tolerance, and so on. Which way to turn? Toward a dictatorship which preserves the old order, or let the "Western" spirit invade the country, starting with tourism? The first answer makes the old regime's advantages vanish. The second, once the doors are opened, will lead to destruction on a large scale at an understandably vertiginous speed.

¹⁵ See R. Guillain, "La révolution culturelle: Préface à Mai 68," *Le Monde*, June 6, 1968, which ended thus: "In all this, China is finally closer to us than we may think, unless we ourselves are more Chinese than we thought. Anyway this proletarian cultural revolution of Peking, which very often seemed an enigma to us, has just shone a light on the happenings in France, making them far more intelligible."

What is there to be done once innocence is lost? Going back in search for it, or trying to hang on to it by force, cannot be done. Yahweh placed angels with a flaming sword at the entrance to the Garden of Eden to prevent any intention of wishing to reenter (Gen 3:24). The answer does not lie in going back, nor merely reforming that which is seen to be harmful, but rather to go ahead, leap into the void, open up to the possible transformation.¹⁶ I was once quoted a phrase by Cardinal Daniélou (probably before he became a cardinal) according to which Roman religious orders and congregations arise from the work and grace of the Holy Ghost, but they continue to exist through pure historical materialism. In short, all reforms are provisional.

The Path of Conciliation

I would like to suggest another approach to the issue. I accept that it may seem somewhat naïve and idealistic, yet after six thousand years of negative experience, why not take the difficult path about which humanity has had a presentiment on various occasions? Does not the *Dhammapada* say (I,5) that according to the eternal law, enemies are never appeased by their enmity? Do we need to remind ourselves of the *Tao-te Ching* or the Gospel?

The word "conciliation" suggests association, union, the council assembled for the common good. It is a Latin word although it partially stems from the Greek *καλέω*, which means "call"; there is also *cum Calare*, "call together" (to the meeting)—very often "call by name," "invite" personally. In ancient Sanskrit, one name for cockerel is *ushā-kala*, he who calls the dawn, who invites it to come over the horizon. It is this "call" I wish to enlarge upon. *Primus sum qui Deum laudat* (I am the first to praise God), say the windvane roosters on the belfries of Christian churches in a large part of Europe. It is also a call to a *concilium*, a reconciliation.

Conciliation evokes the word *έκκλησις*, "congregation," an assembly called to live, worship, argue, and even fight for the kingdom of heaven, for a perhaps still not properly defined cause, yet considered of vital importance to its members. Cicero uses the term in the wider sense of *communis generis hominum conciliatio* (the common relationship [the *religatio*, religion] of humankind) (*De officiis* I:49).

This common effort that we are proposing will not necessarily lead to a simple reform or compromise; nor to an alternative, since there is not one. We need to agree together on the means to adopt to try to find a human answer to the problems of mankind, and not only of one group, one culture, religion, or tradition, even if the System or systems will have to be fought with these same measures.

I am not excluding the sense of the tragic, or the existence of evil, or even guerrilla warfare (which is not like war but like fighting as a partisan) against the System, but I do not consider any one value as being absolute and I am not losing sight of what here I call that which is metapolitical.

It is not a question of a compromise or of an eclectic attitude that refuses to see fundamental incompatibilities. Rather we are dealing with what I call "dialogical dialogue," which leaves all doors to communication ajar, even if they have divergent viewpoints.¹⁷ This is not an easy enterprise. Very often there is a refusal to engage in dialogue, a nontolerance toward those who are accused of intolerance; power and convictions are not easily relinquished; one

¹⁶ The tone of this paragraph, from more than ten years ago, shows now in 1991 as unfortunately very realistic. In regards to Bhutan, its peace in recent years has seen to be disturbed by ethical and socioeconomic problems.

¹⁷ See Panikkar, "The Dialogal Dialogue," in F. Whaling, ed., *The World's Religious Traditions* (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 201–21.

is disposed to go up to a certain point and to make concessions, but not to the point of losing one's own identity or betraying one's beliefs. Here we encounter that which is metapolitical.

This does not mean abandoning all critical approximation and maintaining oneself in a hypocritical attitude of "purity" outside the System. What is at stake is a whole process (that I hesitate to call spiritual, but am unable to find another word) of emancipation from the System: remaining within it without belonging to it, as I have already suggested by quoting the Gospels.

The Christian word that corresponds to this attitude of conciliation is redemption, transformation; it is the attitude of availability to take the weight of action upon oneself, and the responsibility for improving the situation from the inside and externally. It is in this line of *conciliation* that, discreetly, and for some time now, I have been calling out for a second council of Jerusalem and not for a Vatican III.

But let us get back to the conclusions of our exposition.

The Challenge of That Which Is Metapolitical

We can go ahead with these reflections, which have led us to the threshold of that which is political, by seeking to present an outline. Naturally, it is difficult to express it in terms of the current dualist parameters of modern civilization. We refer to the countless studies on politics and that which is political, and current discussions on the very nature of "political science" (or political sciences). But our problem surpasses the level of political sciences as, although it is not a direct contestation of the theories of that which is political, it is seeking the point of intersection of that which is political and that which constitutes human beings. What exactly is that which is metapolitical? It is the anthropological foundation of that which is political, the transcendental relationship between politics and that which founds and sustains it: the meaning of life. This transcendental relationship constitutes a component of life; it is transcendental in the order of being. The mystery of life lies hidden in any human activity. That which is metapolitical reestablishes the intrinsic union between political activity and the human being. As we have already mentioned, it is the point of intersection between man's political activity and his final destiny (whatever name you give to this); it is the point of insertion of the *animal politicum* in the Whole.

Awareness of that which is metapolitical allows the avoidance of, on the one hand, the limitations of seeking refuge in the hereafter, in interiority, in the self, or in a-cosmism, and on the other hand, dispersal in individual action or in an exclusively political activity that would make an abstraction of the remainder of man and of reality transforming it into a specialization. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* (III.29) and Confucius's *Analecta* (II.12) forewarn us against specialization. That which is metapolitical is the presence in that which is political of something that surpasses it, but in doing so does not deny it—therefore, the presence of something that permits opposing political systems not to break their mutual relationships, to continue to be in opposition, and perhaps still to fight, but without killing each other, so to speak, without absolutizing their own system to such a totalitarian extent that it leaves no place for any kind of pluralism. That which is metapolitical is what allows man to survive *politically* within a political system that he considers to be unjust and oppressive. The metapolitical cannot be realized either by separation or by running away; it is more like yeast, thanks to which all the dough is fermented and transformed. It is like the tacit dimension of that which is political, its depth.

How do we discover this dimension? And on its discovery how does one adopt a realistic attitude; that is, how in a single vision can *all* aspects of human life (including public affairs)

be embraced, transcending the latter without denying it? It is not a matter of a new strategy of power or of an esoteric science; it concerns discovering within human beings a nucleus that bonds us to that which is political, to the *polis*, but which is not depleted by political technique, even though man's very nature is (also) political. Human nature is not one partly political and partly individualistic, as neither is it on one hand open to transcendence and on the other intraworldly; it is *simultaneously* in a non-dualist relationship with that which is political and with the rest of reality. Man is a single unit, although we should acknowledge that he has various dimensions. That which is metapolitical would be what intrinsically bonds political activity to the man's being, or better still, to man's being in so far as he is realized *in* and *through* political activity. This dimension is like the profound soul of man's social activity, the element that transcends his individualistic intimacy without alienating it.

A large part of the "basic Christian communities" of Latin America could provide us with an example of that which is metapolitical. It is in the celebration of the Eucharist that they find both the motivation and the means to run their communitarian life—and often to free themselves from the yokes of history or from socioeconomic regimens that crush them. They are committed on the temporal level with an awareness that transcends it. I think that the mysticism of someone like Che Guevara or Camilo Torres goes along these lines, even though their praxis and theories are debatable.

Naturally, introducing a word and a notion that upholds it is not the same as finding an answer. First of all we need to show the reality that this word reveals, that is, its level of truth and therefore its transformational strength. To say that which is metapolitical represents the dimension of transcendence of that which is political should not be interpreted as a declaration that makes the Political rely on the Religious. The transcendence in question is the very one of the Political with regard to (all kinds of) politics; it is the discovery that that which is the Political infinitely surpasses politics (to paraphrase Pascal's phrase on the subject of man).

Metapolitics is not a synonym of trans-politics or super-politics. That which is metapolitical is the *humanum* that upholds that which is political, what makes that which is political a fundamentally *human* activity (and not only of man, to reuse a typical distinction made by the Scholastics¹⁸). Experience of that which is metapolitical leads to fullness of human life, its harmony with the cosmos and above all with man; it is the experience of the oneness of life, not only without the dichotomies of one's own life (the *dvandva* of Sanskrit culture) but also without those of the life of men (in the city) and of life itself (in the cosmos), without excluding Life.

Gandhi's observation that he was not a saint (*sādhu, svāmi, saṃnyāsi*, "religious, spiritual man") who exercised politics, but rather a politician who aspired to become a saint, could come as an expression of this. The Gospel's recommendation to seek the kingdom of heaven and its justice (Mt 6:33) would also be a way of formulating the same thing. This phrase does not speak of being closed in an intimate isolation, but rather to throw oneself into the practice of justice in a kingdom which is *εὐτὸς among us*, and not only *in* or *amid* us (Lk 17:21). That which is metapolitical is the a-dualist relationship between interiority and exteriority. True spirituality is not disincarnate: it must be incarnate to become humanized.

Obviously, this metaphor belongs to Christianity. But Christianity does not tell us that the Word became Jesus, but that the *Ἄρντα* became flesh (*σαρκός*)—Christ shows the way, as he himself is the fully incarnate Word. Another example is the spirituality of the *bodhisattva*

¹⁸ Medieval Scholastic theology distinguished between acts "of man" (in general, performed by man and by animal) and "human" acts (specific to man, like thinking, etc.).

(the sage) of the *mahāyāna* Buddhist tradition, who forgoes leaving *samsāra* (the temporal world) to commit himself to freeing all beings from suffering and help them to attain their salvation; and in this way participates in the activity of human life. This should not be seen as an apologia for the monist lack of distinction that would like to "sanctify" all politics or defend whatever theocracy. This concerns the dimension of that which is metapolitical and not religious politics.

Theological Politics

Christian politics has always been simultaneously put down to the Augustines, Luthers, and Barths, on one hand, and medieval monism along with post-romanesque and modern restorationism on the other; on one hand by theocracies and on the other by liberalisms. Since the British (1642), American (1776), and French (1789) Revolutions; the Napoleonic era and conquests; the holy alliance (1815); the occurrences of 1870; the two world wars; and the more recent fall of the Marxist parties in Russia and Eastern Europe (still alive, above all in Asia), all being Christian currents of thought, have been committed, without much success, to the search of a halfway stage between the autonomy and heteronomy of that which is political regarding theology, we shall not unfold the history of this here. More recently, the names of Eric Peterson, W. Pannenberg, K. Rahner, J. Moltmann, J. B. Metz, and many others are more of the many indications of the thrust undertaken to reintegrate that which is political into theology. These theological efforts are equally reflected in philosophical works by authors such as E. Bloch, J. Habermas, W. Benjamin, and many others. The fact that this direction of thought has been prepared through the prior Judeo-Christian reflection over the theology of history also has to be stressed. These are all important chapters of Western thought.

To what concerns us, we retain only this: the theory of that which is metapolitical is not methodically situated in the line of Christian thematies, although it could be enlisted in the third era (the one after Christianity and Christianism) that I have denominated Christiania (Christianness).¹⁹ Our approach is intercultural, and since the problem, these days, does not only arise inside the olden countries of Christianity or Christianism, it is in my interest to underline the fact that an approach based solely on Christian tradition, just as it has been interpreted up until now, would not be methodically adequate.

The proposals of other cultures and religions should be known and integrated. Explaining all this would lead us far away from our subject. We shall just add that a metapolitical reflection would be registered as a similar issue to one discussed in several works of contemporary theological politics.

If we do not explicitly deal with Christian theology, neither are our reflections situated in neutral terrain. One cannot think (or philosophize or theologize) in "no-man's-land"; that which is intercultural becomes intercultured from the very moment it is expressed, in whatever language employed. Our reflections can both be expressed in Christian terms and in Buddhist or more secular terms; their objective is to broaden, at the same time as go deeper into, a human experience that is these days enriched by multiple cultural contributions and should be able to provide the contemporary human situation with renewed vitality. Man is still uncomfortable, in this situation, at this crossroads, not to say whirlwind, of our belated modern world that is pursuing its identity, without really knowing where he stands. We shall try to pick out some strong points of that which is metapolitical.

¹⁹ See Panikkar, 1987/13.

Symbolic Awareness

To reveal the reality of that which is metapolitical, an awareness that surpasses a simple vision of the reality of what is known as politics is needed, without, by so doing, losing sight of that which is political and without getting involved with any other acosmic or apolitical order. I have my doubts on talking about religious awareness: the expression is loaded with too much feeling and perhaps would not be the most adequate term. I would like to use another expression: *symbolic awareness*. It concerns an experience of the symbolic character of reality, which discovers in everything an inner dimension, different to their sensed and intellectual data, yet is embodied within them. Symbols are not signs, nor are they the pure appearance of things; they reveal to us our intrinsic connection with things. Symbols are the actual things inasmuch as they reveal and open them up to us, and on doing so, we become included within them. The symbol is not the "thing in itself," but rather the *thing in us*, which has surpassed the subject/object epistemological split. That which symbols symbolize is what is symbolized in the symbol itself and not anything different. There is no possible hermeneutic of the symbol. What we use to interpret "symbols" would be, for us, the actual true symbol itself. I understand "symbolic awareness" as being the interpretation of human experience in the light of this symbolic awareness. As has been analyzed elsewhere, what is known as experience is a complex made up of four elements:

- a. Pure experience or immediate contact with that which is real
- b. Memory of this experience
- c. Its interpretation (which is derived from the culture at the core of which this interpretation is made)
- d. Integration of this triple complex in the whole of our life and the culture to which we belong²⁰

I understand experience as being the symbolic awareness of the reality open to our experience. Ανάγκη στήνα! (One should detain oneself [somewhere]). This symbolic awareness cannot now unfold upon itself in an awareness of the awareness, given that this second awareness would be no different from the first, as the symbolic awareness has now surpassed the subject/object polarity; the only thing that enables reflection as a second return from the subject over itself is the cogniscent subject.

However it might be, that which is metapolitical represents becoming aware of an "element" that is not confined to politics nor in that which is political, but rather it is inseparable. We are dealing with a non-dualist experience of reality—of a vision that embraces the "thing" as a whole, without separating it from its source or from man, but at the same time being differentiated; a vision in which the different elements of reality are not separate layers but rather dimensions that are mutually interwoven. The discovery of that which is metapolitical in that which is political allows for survival and radical transformation of the political order without abolishing it. That which is metapolitical balances and completes our first analysis of the alternative. We have mentioned that this cannot be found inside the System. But neither can it be found outside. That which is metapolitical transcends the System in an immanent manner—in the same way as man is not limited within his body, but rather there is no man without the body (body and man are inseparable); just as that which is human is not confined to that which is political nor the latter in politics.

²⁰ See Panikkar, 1970/6.

This is the place of symbolic awareness: the symbolic awareness we discover in all political order, not the existence of another city—to speak as Augustine—but rather an invisible soul in the human city, which we are accustomed to call that which is political. The order of a city can be more or less perfect, yet the citizens, while citizens, are not, so to speak, totally dependent on the invisible regime of civic order. Man can even find a meaning to life in an unjust order, precisely by fighting against it.

On browsing through modern, Christian bibliography on politics, one becomes surprised by the abrupt changes after the First and, above all, Second World Wars. And perhaps one can understand the oppositional reaction of all kinds of fundamentalism.

In fact, this literature has turned toward the world and has accepted modernity, as such becoming practically atheist. Let us remind ourselves of the condemnations of the encyclicals of Leo XIII and Gregory VII against democracy, freedom of consciousness, independence of the state regarding the Church, and so on and so forth. The popes did not pronounce themselves to be against the "unbelievers" of the period, but rather they were more worried by their own faithful ones who had seemed to have been led into being "perverted" by "americanism." Seen from its own perspective, this is very clear. There was no God of politics. There was a certain moral subsistence and in some deeds the reference to Christ is a model to follow, yet politics seems to be perfectly autonomous, independent of the existence or not of God. Many can be *estre cives qui non erunt Christiani mesmes* (The excommunicated do not stop from being Christians), as had already been written in 1560, by Michel de l'Hospital.²¹

The intuition of that which is metapolitical would put the "modernists" in the right and would also explain the embedded anxiousness of traditionalists. "God has left the world to the disputes of man," states the Latin Bible (Eccles 3:11), and therefore, a political theory has no need to introduce an extraneous factor into the political ambit. The God of history—and therefore the God of that which is political, the God of the Crusades, also of Auschwitz and Hiroshima—no longer has any credibility. That which is metapolitical subscribes to another philosophy of history. Monotheism is not needed to reveal this hidden dimension of infinity and freedom in every human act, hence neither in political activity. That which is metapolitical does not deny the existence of the Divine, but nor does it turn God into a *deus ex machina* or "providence" that always blesses the victorious.

I do not wish to go on and on over the importance of symbolic awareness. Stressing two of its aspects is sufficient at this stage—the first is that symbolic awareness is not incompatible with rational knowledge; it is not irrational. The second aspect: symbolic awareness is even there when rational consciousness cannot operate. Not only does this allow us a higher level of tolerance, but also to steer clear of ideological quagmires and the absolutization of opinions or purely political opinions. This also explains the *quid pro quo* of the actual political situation, not to mention the political tragedies of our world, which are, very often, due to the lack of knowledge of the metapolitical roots at the core of purely political activity. Guerrilla bands, maquis, and that which is very often known as terrorism are movements that can be understood at a metapolitical level. The problems of Kurdistan or Khalistan, Northern Ireland, Honduras, Eritrea, and Israel, to name but a few, are varied examples on different continents that would prove this.

We could also go into the different archetypes of the political ambit. While for an army, whether it is mercenary or professional or not, the main concern is to win a battle, for

²¹ Michel de l'Hospital, ed. Pierre Joseph Spiridon (1968 [1561]), 1:449.

a people who are defending their freedom or identity, it means defending that which is, in reality, most sacred to them. A Latin American grassroots community or Kurd, Sikh, Afghan, or Palestinian resistance groups, for instance, can find a meaning to life in their political compromise because they are upheld by that which is metapolitical. In their commitment to political struggle, they are defending the total meaning of their lives, whereas military, police, and bureaucratic forces are there to protect and maintain the political status quo. This is the reason why forces of repression or conquest have to be "motivated" through the narration of (real, imaginary, or provoked) atrocities committed by the enemy. That which is metapolitical is, at the same time, within the sacred and the secular. We still wish to declare some general problematic features.

Sacred Secularity

Progressive secularization of culture produced the separation of two different levels: the political and the religious. We should again reencounter the inseparable role of each, in what I denominate sacred secularity.

A distinction is imposed between the historic process of *secularization* (which Europe went through in the nineteenth century); the ideology of *secularism*, which totally denies transcendence; and the experience of *secularity*, which upholds that the temporal-spatial structures of material reality (*the saeculum*) are neither illusory nor definitive.

On defending sacred secularity, we are not contemplating the sacralization of that which is political into a species of caesaropapism or technocracy. The sacralization of the state is one of the major sacrileges that has been committed in the order of that which is political. But because of the fear of slipping into the extremism of *heteronomia* of technocracies, tyrannies, and dictatorships, one should not become victims of the disseminating *autonomy* of sovereign states or of the individualism of atomized institutions. Sacred secularity reveals to us the *ontonony* of reality within the non-dualist vision of things.

In the order of that which is political there is something more than what is known as political; politicians themselves refer to that which is metapolitical. The separations realized by some cultures should be abolished, without falling into indistinctness, and acknowledge that human happiness, which also depends on social order, still has other independent variables. Some say, that which is political embraces social and human order; the kingdom of justice has to be established upon earth at all costs, even if adversaries have to be eliminated to do so. Others say that after everything is said and done, that which is politics is secondary; true human life unfolds on another plane; what is important is within the intimate immanence (which can be vested in more or less sarcastic forms of abstention) or in ultraterrestrial or supernatural transcendence (which could take on the form of indifference toward the human condition). Both positions seem to me to be mistaken. This is where I situate the non-dualist vision of reality. It is that which is secular in itself, that which is political, that which is sacred—certainly, what is sacred is opposed to what is profane, but not to what is secular, to the affairs of the century. In brief, from the very moment that political activity pertains to the actual nature of man and, in as much as human beings cannot become totally realized without activating their political dimension, the salvation of man, therefore religion, cannot turn its back on that which is political. It is secularity in itself that is sacred.²²

All of this sounds very good, yet how does one go about it?

²² In parallel to this study, I have elaborated another titled *Sacred Secularity*, which allows me to not have to expand on the subject here.

Theory and Praxis

There is a double trap to be avoided, which I simplify by naming it the Marxist trap and the liberal trap. Marxist thought would say, "Let us transform structures, overthrow the System, have a revolution, and the rest will happen on its own. Priority is placed on praxis; meanwhile, if one does not act, one despicably portrays petit bourgeoisieism."

This is, up to a certain point, true. Without rebellions, protests, and revolutions we would still be victims of a worse and more brutal excessiveness. It is thanks to revolutions that the world has freed itself from frightening injustice. But a simple change of structure is unable to unfold at the same pace as basic concepts of reality, and while these are not modified, the change remains rather superficial.

The liberal trap consists in believing that by changing one's ideas, everything else becomes transformed. There can be justified ideas independent of the situation in which one encounters oneself. Preachers would say to laymen, "Have a clear conscience, change your way of thinking, let us change our ideas." This also, up to a point, is correct. Without a new awareness, changes cannot be produced; since we dare not change anything else, on changing ideas, ideas are changed, and nothing else. And everything remains the same as before. One is reminded of Matthew (23:3): "for they say and do not." The same idea is found in the *Dhammapāda* (IV.8), "speeches of those who do not put them into practice are sterile."

If the change of structures alone is still superficial and does not reach the core of the problem, and the changing of ideas, on the other hand, is insufficient and does not lead to any kind of transformation, where do we stand? Here we do not have a strictly dialectic relationship; ideas cannot be changed at a quicker pace than practice is changed and the inverse. Theory cannot be separated from praxis. In their relationship, both are entailed within each other and they will not change more than the extent to which I myself have changed my way of being, my experience, and all that there is in my order of action; and vice versa, my order of action will not change while my ideas have not truly changed. This is not a vicious circle, but rather a vital circle. All theory arises from praxis and all praxis derives from theory. To speak of one without the other is a simple abstraction (of what is real). Again, we are faced with a non-dualist relationship.

To finish, I am going to point out some of the most outstanding political facts of our epoch.

The Nation's Priority over the State

Every true nation is more or less aware of its metaphysical dimension, which makes the nation more than an association with a particular aim. The aim of a nation is life itself. It is because of this that the nation, just as the person, is not a means to reach whatever goal. I have already given an example of anthropological order: my happiness is bonded to the happiness of everyone else; the order at home also depends on that of my neighbor's house; my village, my people need harmonic and peaceful relationships with the world, with nature, with those who live on the other side of the river or border. And nonetheless, I can be happy without, on one hand, folding up egotistically into myself or, on the other, getting drowned in the ocean of humanity—or the cosmos. While I am happy, I help everyone else be so. And so there is a transcendental relationship between I (my happiness) and totality (universal salvation).

In the historic order of nations there have always been particular specifications of the universal ideal of the *humanum*. The nation-state (if we examine the history of the West) has emerged from within an empire, a *commonwealth*, Christianity, that is, a much vaster human project to that of a nation. A universal empire would have the *potestas suprema*, sovereignty. The nation is essentially relationship. It has a *sui generis* relationship with the earth, heaven,

and other nations. It is the growing awareness of that which is metapolitical that allows us to discover we are a nation, precisely because it relativizes the horizontal and vertical dimensions of our existence. As I have already explained, that which is metapolitical is that point of intersection of the other in me, through which I become aware that the development of my nation, the realization of its plenitude is in function of a more intimate and personal realization in a "mystery" that transcends us.

That which is metapolitical is revealed to us in becoming aware that that which is political is not self-sufficient, not even sufficient enough to resolve political problems that man is faced with. For instance, ecology nowadays (however slight it may be) is beginning to endow nations with a vision that transcends them. There is a sense of responsibility toward a much larger and deeper whole. Not only does ecosophical awareness sensitize us to the exhaustion of energetic recourses; it makes us sense that living in harmony with flowers, forests, and animals inasmuch belongs to the beauty and realization of human life.

That which is metapolitical opens up to us a spiritual dimension. For instance, we might speak of the awareness of a nation as human identity and that it surpasses the need of money and so many artificial things. When people get agitated or get on the move it is not always in search of material gain. Just think of the linguistic turmoil in India, of pilgrimages all over the world, and in guerrilla bands on nearly all continents. There is an ideal, something very deep and sincere that justifies losing even one's health and fortune among many other things, without being sure that it will bring one prestige or something positive from the pragmatic viewpoint. In political activity there is something that refers to that which is human inasmuch as human. There were English people who supported Gandhi and whites who followed Martin Luther King!

If you have followed along up until now you will acknowledge, on the contrary to the actual present-day current, a fundamental difference and a functional likeness between that which from the sixteenth century onward would be known as the state, and the Greek *polis*.

The functional similarity consists in a certain aspiration to embrace humanity as a whole. In the *polis*, just as in the state, man accomplishes his social function, which forms part of his human nature. Both tend to embrace the whole, not only that which is political, but also all that which concerns man and leads him to his complete realization. The *polis* along with the state are both institutions, in the full sense of the word, and not only associations or groupings. The difference between associations and institutions resides here in the fact that the former are voluntary and the latter are so embedded in human nature that they are supra-individual, that is, they are above individual will. They are a factor of human cohesion and leave their members the freedom of their individual will—the theory of the social contract is contradictory or ineffective (a contract is needed for the accordance that the social contract establishes).

The fundamental difference is trifold. The first difference consists in the fact that the *polis* is open to that which is transcendental; it has its Gods and its oracles, its spaces of liberty—it is the social function of transcendence. It could be formulated in a way that proceeds from urbanism: the temple, or better still temples, form part of the Greek city; meaning Gods are also citizens. God is not merely that which is transcendent, full stop. His divinity resides in his presence.²³ The Gods are present within the city. The oracle is not simple superstition. But all this is unthinkable in the contemporary state, and the monotheistic technocracies that wish to impose one and one only cult on a heterogenic population would be an aberration. A contemporary state finds itself uncomfortable when tackling that which is sacred

²³ See Otto, 1984.

at the same time as it tolerates traditional forms of worship.²⁴ That which is sacred is not easily integrated into a modern society—just a simple prayer before a quick lunch is seen as something quite artificial and over the top.

The second difference resides in the fact that the *polis* is an institution at a human level, whereas the state can exist on a much vaster scale more easily. A phrase attributed to Pericles states that a democracy is only possible where the *στρατηγός* knows by heart the names of all citizens. The state has a different statute. It sees personal relationships, although they may be indirect, as being unnecessary. Consider the law attributed to Marx, although with Hegelian inspiration, according to which an increase in the order of quantity produces a qualitative change. But the state is more than an agglomeration of people in an urban center; it is more like a network of "objective" relationships, controlled by a power, in order to resolve possible internal conflicts, to protect the life of their members, and to try to maintain a certain standard of living. It is often heard said that a state without power would be a contradiction in terms.

The state is the power that a society gives to itself or from which it believes itself to be invested. It is then when a state constitutes the nation more than the nation constitutes the state. The state is not linked to space, whereas the *polis* is not situated in neutral space (Newtonian or Einsteinian) but in a human earthly space, in the region of what is known as these days as a bioregion. State members are beings uprooted (or free) of human space. One has to be post-Galileo to understand that a human being can be identified by a passport. Space now is not a human category; it has been transformed into a modern physical concept.²⁵ In contrast, members of the *polis* are inseparable from their specific relationship with the earth, which is theirs, their homeland.

The third difference refers to institutions. The city comprises a grouping together of otonomic institutions that are not necessarily centralized. We are thinking here about clans, families, and castes. The city is a human organism. Every member has his/her *ontonomy*. The state has to be centralized; it must be able to, if not exercise strict control, at least be informed of all events. It is the state that redistributes the tribe's products, it enjoys a supreme *potestas*. The *polis* is made up of a grouping together of institutions whose cohesion is assured by a naturally perceived fact. It subsists thanks to a *myth*. The state is an institution of institutions whose cohesion is assured by organization. It subsists thanks to its power.

It could be said that power is the superstructure of the state, whereas authority is the infrastructure of the nation. Nevertheless, to our concern, both a track of action and investigation would be that of beginning to establish the separation between nation and state. If the authority and national identity of the nation is developed without the power-state's assistance, it would separate the nation from the state and we would be on the right tracks to getting out of our actual present-day situation, peacefully. Effectively, we did say that the nation functions like a person, and likewise possesses a cultural identity that makes the realization of its inhabitants possible; it does not smother that which is metapolitical. The modern state, on the contrary, is an individual within the concert of so-called independent states, and as such has to follow the rules of the game, without leaving other space open to anything else other than the individual within the circle of that which is private.

²⁴ I remember the state of confusion created in New Delhi (regarding economic and bureaucratic circles) and the responsible employees' irritation (who were Muslim) before the end of the fast of Ramadan. In fact, it is the peoples' faculty, through the imam, to see in the new moon (announcer of the end of the fast) and not the city's meteorological observatory. If the date of *Id ul Fitr* were to be announced by the latter, it would make other Muslims from other states follow, from Andhra Pradesh or Kerala, for example, the "laws" of the New Delhi moon.

²⁵ See Panikkar, 1991/21.

Let us take Catalonia, a nation at the core of the Spanish state, as an example. It enjoys a certain cultural and linguistic identity along with having its own traditions; its current autonomy allows it to have jurisdictional personality, even at an international level, without a state's inconveniences. It is not a threat to its neighbors, and it has possibilities that nation-states do not possess. Prudent politics would consist in convincing the Spanish state that Catalonia has no intention of constructing another state—it being its wish to have the maximum possible autonomy within the Spanish state—and that an agreement would benefit both countries.

We could also name Quebec and many other more tragic locations such as Palestine, Kashmir, and Kurdistan. The fairly recent occurrences in ex-Czechoslovakia and ex-Yugoslavia, both historical examples in Europe, and the dismembering of the Soviet Empire brings us urgently back before a triple need: to separate nation from state, rethink the composition of multinational states, and surpass the concept of state as being the basis of humanity's political existence. We should acknowledge the fact that there are national consciences that do not belong to states. Civil wars that, in our times, destroy numerous nation-states arise from the revindications of nations seeking independence. These events present us with the inertia of history and human reason at the same time; in fact, would it not be convenient for states to come to some kind of agreement among themselves and reach political cohabitation?

This could lead us far. There is a trend of admitting to the fact that countries can exist without armies, nations that renounce having total power over their self-defense because they have realized that military defense is an anachronism, peoples who do not completely dominate the state's budget as all expenditure does not depend on the treasury of the latter. National awareness is a category that does not belong to economics or exclusively to its military strength. The importance of language is not stressed enough. Every nation needs authority; it does not need total "power." If nations were to be diversified like ethnic groups, they would become tribes.

I am not proposing any kind of concrete political plan. All that I can state is that the previous paragraphs were written, substantially, a decade before the fall of the Soviet Union. It is obvious that the situation of Ukraine is not the same as Palestine or Kashmir. I wish to stress that we need fundamental transformations in the political scheme and that only deep reflection stemming from that which is political can lead us to peace that is not victory of the strongest nor the defeated's heartrending hope of vengeance. We have other impressive, including bloodthirsty examples of this extrapolation: the idea of the older Europe applied to nation-states of Africa and Asia. They have been given (or imposed) a model lacking in local roots. A large part of the multiple, complex, and unsolvable problems of the Republic of India, for instance, come from its pretension of becoming a nation-state, or rather, a multinational state.

On the other hand, we have the direct formation of the states of America that, previously, were not nations, yet apart from some exceptions, most of the states of this continent have developed their own different national awareness: a Venezuelan is not Chilean, neither is a Quebecois an inhabitant of Manitoba. The United States of America, its name already being a revealing factor, cannot still be considered a nation, yet now, for example, California and New England are beginning to develop their own national awareness.

The rights of nations to have their own identity, without them necessarily becoming states, should be revindicated, hand in hand, with gradually convincing states that this evolution is feasible. This is not impossible. The situation of humanity, along with ecological problems, is paving the way for us to realize the real possibility of radical changes in the actual conception of the *res publica*. One cannot get away from the proof of the enormous amount of problems hovering over the present-day world. That which is political shows us here the

methodological error of so-called international, large-scale meetings, although they in fact concern conferences among states. In the course of these official conferences to deal with commerce, industry, customs, and excise, and also education among others, participants cannot question the status quo or rules of the game. They are in the System. Now then, the problem, when it comes down to it, cannot even be mentioned. And, if someone were to dare show the intention of politically criticizing the dominant ideology, it would at the least seem that the tone of criticism had a moralizing or "philosophical" character. We would be urged to write a book about it, but not make political speeches. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) find themselves in a similar position as they are forced to dialogue with governmental agencies. I allow myself to insist upon the fact: that which is metapolitical does not belong to the moral or metaphysical ambit but rather to a political discourse rooted in the metaphysical, moral, and political animal, in human nature.

The Confederation of Peoples

I would like to mention the Greek idea of the *συμπολίτευμα*—that perhaps could be translated as "human civilization"—or simply what Italians denominate *civiltà* (in contrast to barbaric, inhumanity, lack of civility). Here, we are not only dealing with good manners of civility and of courtesy. Perhaps we could also translate the word as "humanity." Another word, *urbanità*, expresses the relationship between the city, converted in *urbs*, and human values. It does not mean being a citizen of the world. It would not be natural. One is citizen of a city, yet this city forms part of the world. The Greek *συμπολίτευλα* was a confederation of cities, a species of federal union, as all its citizens enjoyed the same civic rights. The *πολίτευμα* (mentioned just once in the New Testament, in a text already referenced [Phil 3:20]) talks about the true Christian homeland: heaven. Whether it concerns heaven or earth, the meaning is the same. One ancient text speaks of ancestors as being *πολίτευεται μετά τῶν θεών*, fellow-citizens of God. Or also, they are the angels that accompany the just to divine fellow-citizenship: *πρός τὴν θειαν πολιτείαν*.²⁶ This city rightly represents the plenitude of life.

The word *κοσμοπολίτης* (cosmopolitan) is a typical one. Philo speaks of Adam as if he were the only cosmopolitan, because for he alone, the *κόσμος* was *οὐκες καὶ πόλις* (house and city). Let us remember that the Greek distinction between private and public was represented by house and city, as we have already seen. Somewhere else Philo refers to the *κόσμος νοητός*, of the intelligible world, and also the true *μητρόπολις*, metropolis of the wise man.

What I am suggesting here is the invitation to study ancient wisdom to be able to imagine a new form of human cohabitation. The *sympoliteuma* would not consist of some united states within which everyone has to be unanimously in agreement, because of their mutual dependence, but rather in a confederation of nations in which the national identity of each should not be conformed to a single model, otherwise it could not develop according to its own nature.

This confederation of peoples or nations includes the bioregion in the sense we already explained. It is a confederation, that is, a *foedus*, a "pact" or an "oath." This word is related to *fides*, "faith," "trust." The confederation rests upon mutual trust. It is an alliance in the sense of testament and not in the original sense of syncretism, or pact of cretans, to protect itself from foreigners.

Stress is put on the human family, and very often it is interpreted as a political monomorphism. Human civilization falls back on that which is metapolitical and not a universal public order. The consequences of this awareness lead us to a completely new lifestyle, which

²⁶ See Bauer, s.v., 1952.

should urge us, among other things, to question the actual functioning of the system of the United Nations.

Great benefit can certainly be gained from the United Nations. It represents a real achievement for contemporary humanity. There are many latent possibilities yet to be developed. We should remember that the United Nations is heir to the Society of Nations. Both organizations arose from respective victories. Victory never leads to peace; it leads us to victory. Thus, there is already a certain tendency toward unilateralism. The absentees are not only the defeated; the absentees are mainly those who did not participate in the project—nations and peoples who do not speak the European language. The project of the United Nations is monocultural, sovereignty, and independence; there is no transnational criteria to judge actions of a given nation inside its own territory. There is no possibility of acknowledging what would be transnational and, even less, what would be supranational. The only thing needed is to accept the democratic myth expressed in the Magna Carta of the United Nations—which is actually very beautiful. Every state is an individual, and therefore each individual is the same as all the others. This is the quantitative vision of existence. Yet each nation, as I have already said, has different qualities from all the others.

I am still interested in underlining that the notion of nation, in contrast to that of a state, is basically qualitative. It is this quality that makes a nation what it is. Each nation is unique and not quantifiable. Stressing this extremely important aspect is equivalent to bringing out the "modern" character of the very concept of the United Nations—which does not mean that this notion is false and even less harmful, but rather it leans on a unilateral and monocultural vision.

At the basis of the United Nations' existence there is certainly a desire for unity, of mutual understanding. United Nations: Yet united by what bond? What is the factor of this unity? Would it only be a common interest? But common interest is not the bond of union because the interests of these nations are not common. There may be a common interest in not destroying each other, but the interest of France, for instance, would be that of the isle of Corsica refraining from "dreaming" of its own interests. There is undoubtedly a power in the United Nations—a bond that still keeps the nations united, and which to a certain extent is supranational. The United Nations forms part of a monocultural situation to which I have already made a reference. If its reason for being were wished to be interpreted, they could contribute to this new awareness that is timidly emerging in the actual present-day world: surpassing both the state and absolute sovereignty.

I could provide some suggestions in association with the theme of the United Nations, beginning with moving its headquarters. I propose a suitable place, and I mean it optimistically, which could have a certain consensus in its election: Malta. On the island of Malta four languages are spoken: Maltese, Arabic, Italian, and English. It is a small island, its tradition goes back more than five thousand years, and it has a central geographic position. It is not New Caledonia. The island is in the middle of the old world; all Arab countries look at it as one of their own, and all European countries are satisfied with this election; it is not far from Russia and it also presents other advantages. It is an example of the possible collaboration with the actual present-day order of things, by transforming it. There is no need to be Puritan.

In the second place, I would like the United Nations to do justice to its name so that, from an organization of states, it could be transformed into an organization of nations-peoples. Yet there would be a need to delve down deeper into the intercultural notion of nation-people. We have seen how the state is a totalitarian organization—because of this it calls for a sovereign—whereas the nation is an organization that arises from the people, although it is not restricted to the latter.

These proposals I am making should be pursued deeply, yet could nations not be thought to be complete, enjoying their own total national authority and disregarding the state's power? The great difficulty we are faced with, which cannot be sufficiently stressed, is technocracy's dominion over man of present-day generations; technocracy is neither neutral nor universal, but rather is essentially linked to one single culture—hence my criticism of *technocentrism*.²⁷

The Integration of the Person

While mainly giving examples of headings referring to states and nations, we should not in the least forget to mention the ultimate subject of that which is metapolitical: the human persona. This obviously concerns the knot of constitutive relationships that form the persona and not the individual.

That which is metapolitical gives the persona a meaning to life. Yet human life cannot solely be contented with social and political activity; nor with the wait for the other world to gain its plenitude. Man, as we have said, is a political being, that which is political is necessary for his realization, but this only represents one of the aspects of the human being.

The main difficulty here is not of a theological nature, that is, the issue of that which is beyond, but rather, it is of an anthropological nature, particularly historic. Man is a historic being, and history is not overbenevolent with its victims. How can the human persona become realized within history? To come to an end, I wish to take the part on behalf of the defeated and air the views of the disinherit ed.

Man is a historic being, but not only is he historic; he is more than this. He cannot have a purely historic, and as such political, awareness of existence alone, without falling into desperation or veering off course through cynicism or superficiality. This I see as being one of the reasons for the crisis in the first world. In the effort of unleashing oneself from the bonds of desperation, due to the sense of impotency in being unable to foresee a just world, one falls, because of the lack of a deeper faith, into political indifference or banality. Yet for most, the habitual temptation is desperation. For more than half of humanity, solely temporal life has very little meaning, or rather, it is an absurdity or scandalous. One only has to have lived in Asia, Africa, or Latin America, but also in the ghettos of the wealthy West, to become aware of this. For a certain amount of time now, those who can see no way out of their personal situation keep on going through hope in the future, if not for themselves, at least for their children or grandchildren. These days this hope has been revealed to be vain and alienating. *Godot will not come!*

In these situations, the hope of a better future, not even in a later eschatology, as such historical, does not save the man who lives his singularity as a failure, being this latter his only dignity. The crust of history and of that which is temporal have to be breached. Man cannot live without hope, yet hope is not in the future, but rather in that which is invisible, of that which, in time, transcends it denying it. This is the experience of *tempiternity*; read up on the experience of one year of life, a meeting, a child, a love, a flower, or a kiss is worth more than the rest of existence. One becomes aware; one can feel an inner dimension to day-to-day reality, something that transforms it. It is here, where that which is metapolitical comes into the picture: at the intersection of that which is historical and that which is trans-historical, individual, and personal; the order of the city and the dimension of intimacy; between that which the ancient ones denominated *polis* and *oikos*, that which is public and that which is private.

²⁷ See Panikkar, 1987/21.

To a mother whose child has been snatched away from her through hunger, mutilated victims of crazy wars, refugees all over the place (tens of millions), oppressed and exploited ones (hundreds of millions)—to all this humanity who seek, through tenacity or inertia, to simply survive just a few years or months more—the reality of that which is metapolitical does not claim to make them believe in a better world (which their children will not see) nor in another world (in which the same injustices could very well persist). In their pain and desperation, these people discover pleasurable, amorous, fleeting instants, or moments when thirst is quenched by a glass of water offered by a helping hand. It is here, where a ray of light streams in, which makes one shine with indescribable happiness and endows one with total freedom. The light shining from those bright eyes is invisible and incomprehensible to those who always hope for more, as they still have not reached their lowest ebb. And this brings us to the thought that this ancient blessing, that would go as far as saying blessed are the poor, still has a deep and occult meaning for those who are wealthy—even in lineal time. In the midst of their world collapsing in around them, masses of poor disinherited ones can still smile, have mysterious hope, the joy of having lived fleeting instants, even if everything suddenly comes to a halt.

That which is metapolitical unveils this profoundly human dimension. It is the humane point at which any political project acquires its soul, a soul that is immanent to that which is political, along with it also being transcendent. True immanence is always the place of the experience of transcendence. That which is metapolitical does not flee toward pure transcendence. It should not be seen in the same way as religion has very often been interpreted: as the set of necessary means to attain another world. That which is political does not deny transcendence but rather it awakens our consciousness by making us aware of the fact that to become full human beings we should neither get drowned in political activity nor escape toward the beyond. It is by protesting, rebelling, transforming, failure, and even dying to improve both our situation and that of those in a similar position, the oppressed ones of the land, who will gain their plenitude.

What more can be said about it? That which is metapolitical is the space of liberty in the actual determination of that which is political, governed by the laws of necessity, although these could be framed in the same probability as the laws of physics. That which is metapolitical is the seeing through appearances and the uncovering of the rare "pearl" concealed in the actual current political activity in which we are presently involved. Nearly half of the population of Latin America lives in the most abject poverty, and the future offers them even less hope. What can we say to these people? What can they hope for? What can be done for them? Where have all "the pariahs of the earth" gone? Perhaps a solution will be found for their grandchildren. Yet for them, whose lives are unique, what can we offer them—to those whom we talk of with such ease, saying that human dignity is in itself inviolable and not a path to reach another life or as transit to other lives? And then, what is their destiny? What political proposals can we offer that embrace their actual, historic, and short-lived lives, what is our answer to their suffering, as their questions become too complicated to even be asked? What could—what should we say to them?

Hence, we have hell! What should, or more precisely, what can these people expect? With our utopias, systems, and proposals we will never be in time to save their human life in all its aspects. Should we promote the idea of revolution, when we know they would be their own prime victims themselves, or they just may not have the brute force to carry it out? Perhaps the opium of (religious) resignation, which would paralyze them even more? Are we only to acknowledge the survivors? Do we only wish to take the winners into account? Would we not therefore be approaching a kind of *human engineering*, in comparison to which Hitler's

dreams would seem like child's play? To those whom the System annihilates—millions every year—would it not be better to tell them that they are condemned to be consoled by words, plans, ideas, programs for . . . nothing? For the future? To speak about the future at this stage would be a sort of obscenity. What could the future possibly hold in store for them? For them and not for us! They may have some hope, but they cannot wait.

Now they have lost trust in those who preached resignation and patience. They have discovered that these preachers "spoke and did not do," as stated in the Gospel (Mt 23:3). They have no faith or expectations in political movements. They feel like they have been really let down. In short, neither the beyond nor the future offers them the slightest glimpse of hope. Their only treasure is the present, their own "miserable" lives. These disinherited ones can give a meaning to life, no matter how painful, miserable, or troublesome it may be. If the Kurinji flower, which grows in the mountains of Tamil Nadu and blooms only once every twelve years, has a meaning for the totality of the cosmos (although the latter seems to be indifferent to the fact), the oneness of a single human consciousness also has a meaning even when bearing the weight of tragedy. And it is in this life, where the dimension of that which is metapolitical is interwoven to help reveal the poor, yet joyful, mysterious, and hopeful fleeting feeling of bare existence.

This discovery opens up the way to dedicating oneself to political activity without being afraid of being led astray by success or failure (as it states in the *Gita* [cf. III.4, 19; IV.14; etc.]). Man's salvation is produced in history, but it is not historical.

The experience of that which is metapolitical does not achieve in reaching the depths of the human being without alienating one from reality. If I were not so scared of the weight of the words I would say that that which is metapolitical is the terrain of the mystique, so much so that mysticism flourishes very often in times of crisis. Nevertheless, one could also say that the deepest mystic contemplation does not ignore that which is metapolitical (except perhaps in exceptional cases or it is reached through eminence). Through mystics I do not mean fleeing from the world, but rather an integration of what is believed with the risk of transforming it.

EPILOGUE

A four-year stretch has gone by since the Montreal talks. Having revised and corrected my exposition, I would still like to add on a few more pages.

Going back through history to the French Revolution, leading on to the Russian Revolution, through the period between the two world wars and embarking upon the last thirty or forty years, the literary or perhaps artistic world has been unleashing a collective prophetic tone: postmodernity, which I denominate later modernity, which brings about its own ruin, and drags the rest of humanity along with it. Intellectuals and artists have embraced the *kairos* of postmodernity. They have made us aware of the seriousness of the actual present-day human situation. They reveal to us the cruelty of injustice, atrocities, and punishment, or vengeance, revolutions, and catastrophes to come. They speak to us about the end of a civilization, of its total oblivion, without leaving a trace of hope of resurrection, meaning the end of history. The consensus is inasmuch more accentuated when it crosses the lines of division between right and left, liberalism and Marxism, East and West. General opinion qualifies this state of affairs by means of the ambiguous sense of the word "crisis." However, and even if events prove philosophers, sociologists, artists, and economists to be correct (the world is going from bad to worse), a large number of politicians do not seem to take these signs seriously. Common folk in the street, for other reasons, do not seem to be very impressed by the increasing amount of analysis, warnings, and prophecies of which they can "afford" to think. Yet it could not be any other way; most citizens are trapped by the mechanism in their overwhelming "day-to-day" living, bombarded by information and propaganda, worried about violent local, national, or international events. Apart from these facts one can deduce that the inertia of history is denser than that of matter. Man, compromised in his "daily struggle," reproaches intellectuals and artists for not being workers, without realizing that the world is bent on increasing technologization, peaking homogenization, and ineluctable, unilateral progress. Apparently, fatalism is not the patrimony of the East. Men of action and technocrats, the mechanism of the System, do not cease from repeating—without the slightest consideration for other people's opinions—that the world follows the pace of computers.

In spite of the inertia of masses and the execution agents of the consumer society's purchased optimism, testimonies upon the seriousness of the human situation are too charged up with sentiment, too strident for them to be taken in under the pretext that pessimism is devitalizing, that the signs of alarm are imaginary and are derived from a conservative attitude, which is nostalgic for a "past" epoch that has never existed: *laudatores temporis acti!*

Pessimism can certainly be just as paralyzing as optimism. Both are subjective positions, which have to be neutralized by one's own awareness. We have to overcome unilateral pessimism just as much as optimism a priori based on the victories of the "goodies" throughout history, progress, and our earthly paradise. Man is not only history. A large part of humanity's traditions, those that in the West are thought of as being primitive, underdeveloped, or idealistic, having dismissed and denied of human values, do not believe that man's dignity lies in his individual historicity. Slogans such as "We shall overcome" or "Venceremos," along

with the war cries of cavalry—"It is in God's will," "Gott mit uns"—have suffered too many defeats, and committed so many atrocities in His name that that it would be a waste of time recalling them. The motivation for human performance cannot just be brought down to the hope for victory (no need to quote the *Bhagavad-gita*) in a horizontal future for our decedents, nor even to the eschatological hope in the prolongation of history. As we have already mentioned, hope does not pertain to the future, it belongs to that which is invisible. It reveals the invisible dimension of reality to us. This dimension is not concealed in an "after" (this life) or in the "beyond," but rather it is transcendently immanent, although it may be immeasurable, regarding the historical space-time dimension. This is why eternity, inseparable from temporality, cannot be reduced from it; and because of this there is something irreducible to that which is political in man, which is not in function of that which is political although is inseparable and not completely independent from it.

I would now like to go back over what I am seeking to communicate in this epilogue: the mystical character of that which is metapolitical, such as the experience of a temporal, social, historical, and therefore political reality, which at the same time is transtemporal, personal, religious, and as such transcends that which is political. This has all been mentioned in the text. Here, I wish to underline the existential aspect of that which is metapolitical, its challenge to our way of thinking and lifestyles. So far, we have not been very sensitive to this challenge, as to be aware of its existence one has to be within—in the same mode as when ethics only has any meaning to those who live in (its) *ethos*. Paradoxically, to be conscious of history's end, one has to live submerged within it, not in the banality of "journalism," which is the opposite of true day-to-day "living." When you get to the crux of the matter, "daily life" along with its heroism, is the opposite of "journalism," by which, via the mass media, spirits are entertained by the updating of countless, unconnected news items. On the same page in a newspaper and on a televised news broadcast, there will be a more or less immoral advertisement that will paralyze any reflection, capacity of reaction, doing anything about it, which creates a certain confusion among spirits. A certain kind of "journalism" of some so-called newspapers is the opium of thought, of action, and of life. The avalanche of news items and counter-news items (as in advertisements) has a suffocating, devitalizing, and oppressing effect, which robs one of all freedom. Our modern yet desacralized world remains true to the morning and late evening prayers—only that the latter, in general terms, entails reading the newspaper or watching the television!

This obviously does not entail reverting to ancient, surpassed positions, or stir up a kind of nostalgia yearning for the good old days—nor even the eradication of daily news. Neither does it mean bringing back a certain kind of metaphysics, or perhaps mystique from the past. But nor does it concern being enthusiastic about progress and falling into the same trap once again, yet in the opposite sense. Neither progress nor regression, neither evolution nor involution. True human life is not in the past or in the future, even though both are real and form part of reality.

We have already mentioned the concealed yet real dimension of political activity, of its religious aspect, one could say. I would like now to express myself, perhaps a little more directly.

In all probability, the pages of this book will be read by readers who, in their majority, can afford to speculate over such a theme, as they can afford to wait and can even "tolerate" my more or less convincing opinions. For these people, it concerns a truly interesting and important, yet not vital issue of intellectual order. But it is not as such for the great majority of our contemporaries, all those who are not readers of my books; they cannot wait, as they may possibly be decimated by hunger or sudden illness this very same year. They hold no power to be able to express themselves, sometimes not even to think for themselves, since

their minds have been conditioned for generations by perpetuated infrahuman life conditions; they are denied human life itself.

Without a doubt, there are traps all over the place, both in the future and in the innerness, in history's dream, as in the mirage of an empty present time, when fleeing and in stability. Life is an adventure and holds all these risks. That which is metapolitical, the hidden dimension, can make us more aware of all these aspects of reality, where they all meet, and by means of this becoming aware, free ourselves for action that blooms from life's plenitude, which could be endowed the name of contemplative action.

Tavertet
Easter 1987

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Life loves to be lived. The word belongs to human life; it is the energy of life, according to the *dzog-chen* Tibetan Buddhist tradition, following an almost universal model on considering the human being as a conjunction of thoughts, words, and deeds (intellect, word, body). During recent years, I have trusted my thoughts to the word that, eventually, has been deposited on these pages. Writing is a substitute for the word; it is a means of purifying words, to express them in a broader context. And time is another great purifying agent. In the course of these years, the situation in the world has led me to be increasingly convinced that the metaphysical dimension of existence, which could be denominated monastic, mystical, or vertical and even religious, cannot be eliminated from human life or considered as being an extrinsic and accidental complement to the political life of man. It is time to heal the wound of dualist separation without straying into monist indiscrimination. The autonomy of nations and the actual person have been subjected to the heteronomy of empires and religious institutions. Now we are called to discover the path by means of *ontonomy*. That which is metapolitical is presented as the non-dualist harmony between religion and politics—both of which have too often been converted, into two institutionalized specializations that have been at the bottom of so many of humanity's wars up until our days. Man seeks his salvation, the human being is not realized by losing interest in its body and the *polis*, by abandoning or even disowning them, but rather by integrating all fragments of its being and, in a microcosmic way, contributing to the macrocosmic reintegration of reality. I wish to pay a tribute to the testimony of a large number of politicians of the past and of our times, who, in spite of what could be known as weakness of youth or temptation of power, have consecrated their lives to the "public cause," the *polis*, politics, as the ideal to pursue, the form of contribution toward the welfare of humanity and the realization of its being. All these people are not egotists, superficial, or "unbelievers." They have tried to more or less unconsciously find their salvation, perhaps, in that which is metapolitical. They have sensed that the affairs of the city would not refer to questions of means or contribution to a material well-being of citizens; they have had the deep sense of plenitude in their life dedicated to what in Christian terms is known as the "kingdom of heaven"—to be realized here on earth. Obviously, very often, it is having retired from public life that they really become aware of this deep sense—and frequently from missed chances—of that which is metapolitical. This does not only mean recalling the names of Caesar, Marcus Aurelius, Ashoka, Napoleon, Churchill, Hammarskjöld, or Moro. There are countless names we could bring up. Their lives were dedicated to politics not only due to their thirst for power and fickleness for prestige; they were also driven by a thirst for justice and a will of realization. The passion of that which is political is not only maintained

by a latent and rudimentary egotism, but also a more or less conscious impulse, toward that which is metapolitical where the salvation of man resides. The same thing happens in spiritual circles, those of the contemplative ones, of consecrated persons called to religious life; perhaps they have not been pushed into what is known as the active life, into being interested in affairs of this world, to strictly realize their *agapé*, *karuṇā* (compassion), *dharma*, or their ideal whatever it may be. The great contemplative ones have always been active, directly or thanks to their influence over the *kshatriya* ("the princes"), popes, and politicians; they have shown interest in the *res publica* that put them in danger. There is no need to mention here Buddha, Socrates, Jesus, the great Bodhisattva, the Sufi, Bernard of Clairavaux, *Rāmānuja*, Ignatius of Loyola, or Ibn Arabi. Intellectuals such as Sañkara, Sāntideva, Hemachandra (the Jain monk who wrote his *yogasūtra* for the king who made him a minister), Buenaventura, Kant, and Marx; and above all, the unnameable, anonymous beings who believe in the *dharmakāya* (the body of Buddhist laws), in the *nirmāṇakāya* (the body manifested to Buddha), in the mystical body of Christ or in universal solidarity, and who have lived like Jewish sages who feel co-responsible for the destiny of the universe.

Hence, it is as if there are two worlds, which are so different that they come close to that which is metapolitical. "Politicians" turn politics into their lives' ideal, and as such a religious ideal. "Religious people" give their prayers to that which is Divine; no matter with what name it is endowed, it is an ideal for that which is religious, and therefore, for the salvation of the world, the *lokasamgraha*. *Qui facis utraque unum* (You who make two into one) states the preparatory Christian liturgy of the Man-God's birth—one that is exempt of dualism *ekam ekādvitīyam* as the *Upaniṣad* says and that is suggested in the *Tao-te Ching* just as it is in nearly all traditions. Is this not the symbol of Incarnation/embodiment? The space/distance between that which is Divine and what is Human has not been reduced to nil (monism) nor to an artificial juxtaposition (dualism) but rather to a plenitude of Being or to the vacuity of the *śūnyatā* in the dynamic harmony of cosmotheandrical reality. "The builders will go overboard but the city shall be built."

Kodaikanal
Nativity 1990



Part 3

FOUNDATIONS OF DEMOCRACY: STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS*

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DEMOCRACY'S STRENGTH

The Myth of Democracy

I believe that these days, we, above all the privileged ones (like the majority of us who belong to the wealthy one-fifth part of the world's population: ninety-five times richer than the four other fifths of the poorer population), and even more the ones who cultivate our intellect, have to assume our responsibility and not allow ourselves to be taken in by the inertia of our mind or by the burden of history. We should be aware that at this stage in time a mutation, which perhaps has not come to pass for the last six thousand years, is being cried out for. The human experience that began with what is known as history is coming to its end. And if we truly wish to live human life and life in general in full, we have to seek to embrace such a huge period of time to be able to assimilate it, make a diagnosis of the present moment, and transform it.

When we approach the topic of "the limits of democracy," we are aware that it commences with a semantic problem: Who has the authority to say that the GDR, the already defunct republic of East Germany, did not have the right to be known as the *Deutsche Demokratische Republic*? Who can give themselves the authority to say that it was not democratic, if the others did not accept it? Are we not now straying from the democratic spirit?

The limits of democracy—and this is my background thesis—coincide with the myth that founded them. What we mean by "myth" is that horizon of intelligibility, that which we believe to such an extent that we are not aware of the fact that what we believe "es evidente," "cela va de soi"—that it "is taken for granted" and is not disputed. History shows us that myths are alive as long as people take them for granted, that is, they believe in them. Yet as time goes by we question them, converting them into problems, which we "contest," in the etymological sense still alive in French and Italian. Democracy is turning into a myth, but many are beginning to ask themselves about its limits. Here we are also living a radical change of the horizon of human experience. I am bringing up the fact that democracy's strength is its myth, as soon as I said myths become myths when they are believed in.

Westerncentrism

The word *democracy*'s marginal existence barely lasted for three centuries in Greece, from 500 to 200 BCE, afterward practically disappearing from the panorama of the world to eventually resurge much later on, stemming from minor efforts and being consecrated after the French Revolution, at least in what the English call the Continent. In the British Isles, for instance, the word *democracy* had a pejorative meaning up until the end of the nineteenth century. Two hundred years ago Kant wrote in *Zum ewigen Frieden* (Perpetual peace, 1795) that *democracy* is the path toward despotism. The monoculturalism that still characterizes us has prevented other political (in the classical sense of the word) forms in

other civilizations to be studied at this level; hence, we often stumble into the false dilemma of "democracy or dictatorship."

The positive aura that the word acquired after the French Revolution transformed it into a myth, which explains why nearly the whole world wishes to be democratic. Since then so much has been written on the subject, with people/authors/philosophers from bishops to intellectuals telling us that the best way to be human, to be Christian, is to be democratic.

A short while after the French Revolution, in 1791, Claude Fauchet, who had resurrected the formula of "Tout pour le peuple, tout par le peuple, tout au le peuple" (Everything for the people, everything by the people, everything to the people) and who saw democracy as a divine institution, was not afraid to state that Jesus died "for the democracy of the universe." In the very same year, Lamourette, the bishop of Rhône-et-Loire, used the expression "démocratie Chrétienne." During Christmas 1797, the future Pope Pius VII, at that time bishop of Imola, exhorted his parish to be good Christians—and then went on to add, "You shall also be the best democrats." Later on, in 1814, Görres speaks of the *demokratisches Prinzip*. The West went on to export its values with this very optimism.

Westerncentrism was justified under the belief that the West was the holder of universal values. Kant sees the founding criteria of ethics as being that its principles can become universal rules—with total coherence with their enforcement. At least throughout the past five centuries, monoculturism has dominated the Western world. We should not forget that at the beginning of the First World War, more than 80 percent of the earth's surface was under the protection of, influenced by, or a colony of a European country. Afterward this species of dispersal has been produced, which leads us to think that, as there are now 181 States in the United Nations—if I am not mistaken—we have become independent from this Western myth that once said, "One God, one civilization, one culture," and that now believes, "One democracy, one bank, one world market"—and wants to have us believe in "globalization."

What these days is known as the world, seen on a geographical and political map, is basically the result of a Western vision that claims itself to be universal. The United Nations, education, modern science, and actual present-day cosmology are all extraordinary creations of one single culture, yet we think them to be extrapolatable to other cultures. Now then, if we do not bring culture down to just folkloric activity, other cultures have a vision of the world, the truth, culture itself, and human cohabitation that has no need to be the same as (in fact it is often very different from) the current predominant culture. But actually, looking forward to the next millennium, monoculturalism seems to have lost its strength. The doubt has risen to the surface that if something is good enough for me, it perhaps does not necessarily have to be good for everyone. For instance, if it is good for me to have a car, then everyone should have one. But if every single individual on the planet had a car, within twenty years one would not be able to breathe. Or if all individuals on the planet used paper with the same "generosity" as in the United States, and that is including recycled paper, in two years there would not be any trees left on the planet, not even in Andorra. We are talking about a civilization that since the end of the Second World War, in 1945, has witnessed the death of approximately fifteen hundred people daily in different acts of warfare—it seems that now the number is increasing. This civilization has taken the difference between rich and poor people to a greater extent than even the fiercest periods of feudalism, because the wealthiest feudal lord would have five castles and forty overcoats, among other things, but he could not have thousand-horsepower machines or monetary profits in his account, which have nothing to do with things—a civilization that has, in just one century, destroyed the lives of more than a hundred million people in the most cynical of ways—and very often in the name of democracy.

I do not only wish to insist upon the negative aspects. As I have already spoken of the responsibility of ideas it is worth reflecting upon the passing of the Cartesian obsession for the convinced political obsession for security. Our world is so hysterical when it comes to security that it believes that it needs thirty million soldiers wandering about the planet, and that is without counting police and other security forces. Actually, it has been made public after the Cold War that, after the atomic bomb's first explosion, there have been atomic tests every nine days. One should ask oneself of who and what we are actually afraid. And I shall go on to say that army and democracy are incompatible.

This is the backdrop upon which I wanted to say something about democracy. I consider this introduction to be important because if the actual so-called democracy is not the direct cause of the state of affairs in the world, it certainly participates indirectly and therefore is co-responsible for them.

Historical Excursion

Now is not the time to explain the vitality and fecundity of the Greek world's viewpoint, a long time before Aristotle and Plato. Although I do not turn my back upon Greek words, as one of the dangers of current democracy is loss of memory—and these days in the West, the whim that classical education is of no use at all whistles in the wind. As Greece was a gathering of cities rather than an empire, the Greeks were just as interested in individual survival as for human cohabitation. They believed in the myth of cosmic order. Reality is as it is, and this latter "is" is that which endows us reality's criteria and what converts it into the rule of things. Disorder only has any meaning when posed against established order. At the beginning there is cosmic order, which is, in one fashion or another, all right for all civilizations—the *rita* of the Vedic civilization, the *moira* of the Greek civilization. Anyway, it seems that man has the power to distort this cosmic order; as such the notions of *dharma* in India and *nomos* in Greece arise. The fact that the Chinese *tao* does not seem to suffer this evolution is significant—perhaps it is because it is always accompanied by *li* ("beginning"). In contrast to cosmic order, the *nomos* can be distorted. It goes from a cosmocentric vision to an anthropocentric one. *Nomos* does not primordially mean "law" but rather "custom," *ethos*, "right": *Wohlordnung* is the word German Hellenists use to translate it.

The Greek people believe in the three daughters of time: *eunomia*, *dikē* and *eirēné* (good order, justice, and peace). I would like to levelheadedly stress the qualitative intuition of time and how temporality impregnates these three daughters of time.

Eunomia is a cultural myth throughout ancient Greece. It seems as if *eunomia* is the result of the good in man: "justice is what makes one just," is what Aristotle states and hence justice arises. We still speak of "quiet times of order and justice and peace." The three sisters go hand in hand.

Eunomia has the same prefix as evangelist, euphoria, and so on. It is the good, constructive *nomos*, the order that surpasses disorder. Its opposites are *anomia* (illegality, lack of order, rules) and *dysnomia* (dysfunction, distortion, or alteration [always partial] of order). Here, another great word comes onto the scene, which belongs more to Sparta than to Athens: *isonomia*, equality of rights. The prefix *iso* is found in isotope, isosceles, and so on. *Isonomia* did not refer to how one governs but rather to who governs. When this word began to be used, the great revolution was that governors had to alternate, yet not rising to power through political propaganda but rather in function of a kind of lottery as all thought themselves to be possessors of that virtue, in which there could be no specialists: political virtue, the *ars politica*. To know medicine, agriculture, and architecture—three examples of approachable

science of those days—special and specialized knowledge is required. To know how to deal with public affairs, politics, there is no need for any special knowledge. It is something that concerns everyone and belongs to everyone. We are all implicated. Up until the point when Pericles says that democracy is only possible when the governor knows the name of every single one of his subjects. Who actually governs? Governors would be chosen by chance, out of many. Afterward, they would obviously be obliged to reveal their form of government on handing over power to the incoming governor. With this, a kind of homeostasis is created between that which is public and private. The ideal of every subject having the same opportunity of being able to participate in the government is outlined. If *eunomia* means "good government" (of the noble class, which in fact governs) *isonomia* means "equality of all" before the *nomos*, the ruling order of all things, especially society. It does not mean equality before a set of written laws or constitution, but rather before cosmic order.

This *isonomia* would crystallize in *politeia*, which later on would be known as a constitution (which Latins still denominate *politia*). A constitution was considered to be needed, a *politeia* that would consolidate ancestral experience. *Politeia* is the art of living well within the *polis*, something much more complex than what these days is called a written constitution. A country such as England still does not have one—and has no intention of having one, with certain reason. Administration or economics of the city was the given name to something very different from the aim of, also in those days, *stasioteia* or dominion of political parties.

We cannot go any further. The main occupation of those "free men" consisted in exercising the word, along with the actualization of man and exercising power. Let us not forget: the weapon of democracy is the word. Dictatorships and demagogies are both well aware of this. And, taking a leap forward into our times, the crisis of democracy runs parallel with the weakening of the strength in the word. In one of my books I have made a co-relationship between the decline of rhetoric and increase in wars. Not without reason, the house of the word—parliament—is the essential instrument of democracy.

Another three basic notions were still to arise: the *isogoria*, the right to talk about all citizens; *isocratia*, equal distribution of all powers; and later on, with Plato's *Republic*, the *noocratia*. He thinks—the weakness of intellectuals—that it is only philosophers, the intellectuals of those times, who have a large and open enough mind to be able to govern. It is the government of philosophers—which we could now translate for the government of experts, not to say, technocrats.

It is then that the word "democracy" begins to appear, to later practically disappear in the second century BCE. *Démos* principally means "territory" ("endemic," "epidemic") not "people." People is *Laos*, from whence prayer arises. *Démos* also means "inhabitants of a territory," but this would gain meaning later. The strength of democracy is the strength of the territory. Democracy was consolidated when the people of Athens (numbering twenty to thirty thousand, living in an area of twenty-six hundred square kilometers, roughly the size of Luxembourg) discovered that "unity is strength." This entailed that all needed to participate in power. In the fifth and fourth centuries BCE there were some 250 independent "states" (*polis* and *etnia*) as well as some "barbaric" ones (the Thracians) in Greece. There is a hidden source of imperialism in Athenian democracy. Since then, one of the strengths of democracy has been that if the *démos*—if our territory—is united, it becomes stronger. To be united, all citizens should be consulted so that everyone is able to give their opinion. I say citizens and not inhabitants. To give a more recent example, the "great British democracy" was based on the fact that scarcely forty million islanders held the destiny of more than fifty million "colored" people in their hands. Something similar, although to a lesser extent, happened in Greece, excluding women, elderly people, and foreigners.

That is why democracy has paradoxically arisen before a common enemy. When democracy is institutionalized, each democratic State declares itself sovereign. Consequently it does not want anyone else interfering in its affairs nor does it let others participate in the rights of citizenship of that particular *démos*, of that territory.

Words have a certain life of their own and they embody, I would like to be able to say, "word," the most profound institutions of man. I shall allude to the previously mentioned trilogy: *eunomia*, *isonomia*, *demokratia*.

Eunomia suggests a certain approval in that there is a good and just order, a *nomos*, *rita*, *dharma*, *tao*, *torih*, a law; in the final instance a transcendence, a God or however it is known, that is above us and to which (or whom) man has access if this latter order is followed or recognized. The problem would be in its interpretation and representation. Royalty, monarchy, heaven, religious institution, or theocracy represents and guarantees it. Things are held together while this *nomos* is accepted by all parties, until the transcendence, which is manifested in the institutions, becomes a myth—in the indicated sense.

But abuse densely thickens and the myth becomes problematic. So equality of all is called for to achieve this *eunomia*, since everyone represents and participates in this order to a certain degree. This is *isonomia*. Here there has been such an important and very often unconscious transference. *The myth is moved from transcendence to immanence*.

If we are all equal and have the possibility of deciding the paths that lead to personal and collective realization of the order of the universe, it means that this order is no longer endowed by heaven, but rather it is us who have the right and duty to manage, direct, and even forge it. In brief, the people are sovereign. We emphasize the word *superianus* (*superanus*) from *superior*, "the highest," the ultimate instance—the *super*, *hyper*, *upa*, *utama* in Sanskrit.

But the third step is imposed. It is the transition from rule to power. Now it is not power (of the *nomos*) over the people but rather the power of the people. A Greek phrase is "power has been democratized." It is not that the people recognize the *nomos*; the people set the rules, the law, for themselves.

This is, very briefly, the history of the origin of democracy. Democracy represents a step forward when it stipulates in the first place that all people, however insignificant, participate in public life, and second, that governors should bow before the will of their subjects, their wishes and deeds. These are two essential pillars of democracy: participation and transparency.

DEMOCRACY'S WEAKNESS

To begin, I wish to make clear that my reflection does not center around mistakes made by what are known as democratic systems or regimes. I am not criticizing any particular country, although if I were to air my views on the so-called present-day democracies I would say that they were an oligarchic farce. Perhaps both democratic and communist ideals are utopias. But this is not my subject. Again I say that I am not criticizing the *praxis*—of the errors made by “democracy,” of the corruption that there may have been. Neither am I seeking to give lessons on ethics, saying that democracy does not work because man is bad. Nor do I believe that man has always been bad or that all democratic mistakes have been made due to the fact that man was corrupt and yearned for power just for the sake of it, and so on and so forth. My criticism of democracy is not a criticism of corruption and democratic hypocrisies. In fact, one should take into account that criticism that is made of democracy's corruption and mistakes is criticism that takes place because of the parameters with which actual democracy itself provides us. Thanks to democratic criteria I can criticize democracy, and I can say that military order is not democratic or that the actual democratic system—the United Nations or the *Realpolitik* of many governments, banks, and churches—is not democratic. This is not my role. He who is free of sin should throw the first stone. This pertains to human weakness, among other things, and not to the weakness of democracy—although we could ask ourselves about the proclivity toward corruption in a democratic system.

We must also very precisely differentiate between democracy as a technique of government and as the sustaining ideology. They have a very close relationship, but they are not the same. As a governmental technique democracy puts the popular vote, governmental transparency, the flexibility of the changes in rulers, and in general terms, the participation of the people in public affairs into practice.

All this can more or less function well while people accept the ideological bases of democracy. And it is these that we shall be criticizing with the following—going on to add, however, the criticism is aimed at the demythification of the myth and not the previously mentioned techniques.

Democracy takes it for granted that others are not us. It requires a more or less coherent group to be centered upon itself. Yet when it is maintained that others are not us, the most serious problems of the democratic principle arise. Winston Churchill's famous phrase: “The problems of victory are more agreeable than those of defeat, but they are no less difficult. It is the lesser of two evils.” Possibly at the historic moment when Churchill pronounced this phrase (a historic moment in which we still encounter ourselves), there was no better alternative to democracy. If I rightly recall it went, “It has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.”

I would not go as far as to say I agree with Churchill's cynicism, because the greatest of barbarities have been committed justified by the theory of the lesser of two evils. Yet it should remain very clear that criticism of democracy does not mean accepting the already mentioned false dilemma. Many times, criticism of democracy is aired with a certain guilt complex, as if there would be fear of being accused of being totalitarian. It is obvious in this case that the cure is worse than the illness. This is not the issue. In fact, accepting the dilemma expresses a certain totalitarian mentality: "Whoever is not with me is against me."

This could be the reason that in modern democratic States antidemocratic practices such as the "secret services" are tolerated, under the justifying smoke screen of them being needed to ensure "national security." Let us not forget that our obsession with security has unbolted the door to a great majority of dictatorships, which also justify themselves as being the lesser of two evils. Here the pessimism of the desacralized *theologumenon* of the "original sin" is manifested, although, without the Christian optimism of redemption.

I shall then summarize some criticisms of democracy; nonetheless, first we should make another general observation. The word "democracy" has monopolized a series of values that are not specific to it. This happens to all words that are converted into symbols of a myth. For instance, the word "science." Everything that is serious and true these days is given the name "scientific"—all that is good, in Spain today, is said to be "European." Equality of human dignity, the value of dialogue, respect for the person, and tolerance are not exclusive monopolies of democracy. For example, the famous *dictum* that all lawyers know: *quod omnibus tangit ab omnibus tractetur* (that which belongs to all has to be managed and decided by all) was proclaimed in times of empires, and not precisely democratic ones.

And so, what exactly is specific to democracy? We should really ask ourselves, what are its limitations? Here I spell out some of these weaknesses.

The Closed Circle of the Rulers and the Ruled

One initial fundamental problem pertains to the democratic system's very ideology (what I mean by ideology is the system of ideas that endows consistency, in this case to democracy). Some Greek thinkers already asked themselves if there was not a kind of vicious circle that could in the future lead to the intrinsic corruption of democracy, in that those in government were the same as their subjects. We have all been through the same at home: governors and subjects sat together around the dining table. That is why democracies have so often been raised to the exclusion of others. If rulers and ruled both always reach some kind of agreement because we keep alternating, this vicious cycle is generated. I allow you to do what you wish, because later on you let me do the same.

Let us recall the disturbing events that happened in consular Rome. When patriarchs, rich landowners, held the reigns of power, they were incorruptible—but the situation changed when people with no personal fortune were elected. Stated in a more philosophical manner, when something transcendent is acknowledged by rulers and ruled, the aforementioned danger arises. Just think of the case of the giant industrial machine giving its support and financing political parties, which in turn would favor the particular multinationals that had helped them.

It is not a question of yearning for theocracies and absolute monarchies, nor minimizing the factor of what is known as the religious abuses; but without the divine element, there can be no peace or justice among men. If my opinion is just as good as yours and there is no higher level of judgment, we shall resort to forceful violence—and if this depends on weaponry or outnumbering troops, any means shall be employed to conquer power. If *homo homini*

lupus and no elephant is respected by all, the wolves devour each other as soon as the merest conflict is produced. This does not mean the wolf leaping onto the elephant's back to impose its rule. This is theocracy in its prerogative sense. If representative democracy is problematic, representative theocracy is monstrous—which does not mean it cannot have a sacred order, but this sacred order would not be made up of representatives but rather of symbols.

After all is said and done, the acknowledgment of a higher order cannot be imposed. It has to be discovered and recognized. This is the power of myth. The democracy of fractions, that is of "parties," only functions when the "whole," which is known as homeland, God, peace, or whatever you wish to call it, is recognized to be above parts (parties). Then, parties only dispute the means to reach an end. This end is the myth—in which all believe.

The problem arises when this end becomes narrow and partial in the eyes of some. The welfare of my people could end up in conflict with the welfare of another nation. This is the danger of nationalism. And, if now the planet turns out to be small to us, perhaps it is the moment to rediscover the sun, metaphorically speaking—naturally, a sun that shines for all men ("righteous and sinful") and for the whole world.

Idealistic Anthropology

Another fallacy is one we have already insinuated, which consists of saying that democracy is in theory the best system in the world, yet we still have not put it to the test. The fallacy is the same one that was seen in communism and is still seen in Christianity. Its verisimilitude has extremely deep roots in the West: this is the Platonic verisimilitude. The democratic, communist, Christian *idea* may well be perfect, but ideas are not reality. And both democracy and communism along with Christianity all claim to be a reality. It is no excuse to speak of the dignity of Christianity and the indignity of Christians. "Ye shall know them by their fruits." How can one know someone is a Christian from outside, if it is not through their Christian behavior? In the same way, how can one know the functioning of democracies if it is not by observing how they work? To say that "democracy is chemically pure; it is man who spoils it" is no excuse. What is it, then, that democracy has that when it is put into practice it fails (without going into the thorny cardinal problem of the relationship between the idea and the thing)?

We shall be told that democracy has failed to the same extent as communism, for example. Apart from the fact that at a worldwide scale this statement could be doubted and that comparisons are always odious, the question is not solved by seeking a worse case: "mal de muchos consuelo de tontos" (evil of many, consolation of fools). The critique of democracy, precisely because we believe we are embarking on a good path, cannot be contented with a lesser evil. We should go far deeper. Man is not a wolf or an angel. "Sed quis custodiet ipsos custodes?" (But who will guard the guardians?), Juvenal asked in his *Satires* (VI.347).

Individualism

This is a very important and ambiguous factor, which is the strength and weakness of democracy. While the myth of individualism lasts, democracy will remain strong. If this myth fractures, democracy will become weak.

There is historic proof in what I am saying in the fact that democracy is the "in thing" in those countries where individuality is more widespread. Whoever knows Central and South America, Asia, and above all Africa will take into account that there is a certain "foreignization" of democracy. People do not believe in it.

It would be a great mistake to counterpose individualism to collectivism, as was generally done during the Cold War. Wars do not leave the spirit at peace; there is no peace even to think. And this false dilemma has a lot to do with the fall of communism and the present tragic situation of the former Soviet peoples.

The alternative to individualism is not collectivity but rather the persona—as within this persona there is a knot of relationships that range from blood ties, castes, clans, peoples, languages, and so on, reaching as far as the very limits of the universe. The fact of abuse and exaggerations does not justify the opposite extreme. For instance in India, caste and *casteism*, community and *communalism* are all differentiated. From now on our reflections are implied one within the other.

The Primacy of Quantity

Everything is coherent. If man is an individual, his relationships with everything else such as the earth and divinity are based on external and accidental ties of one substance to another. In brief, taking giant steps, this means the primacy of quantity over quality. If democracy is supposed to work through numbers, by means of majorities and minorities, this means that public affairs are seen and judged from the quantitative viewpoint. For some reason this is one of the fundamental dogmas in modern science. Quantity is portrayed as the most important parameter of reality and the algebraic algorithms of the functioning of things that endow laws that follow nature—from human nature to the nature of electrons or whatever you can imagine. The primacy of quantity entails that supremacy in number is the most important and something that enables democracy to function. In India, which is considered as being the largest democracy in the world, it is often said, not without sarcasm, it is not a vote for each person but rather a vote for a rupee, or more likely a thousand rupees a vote, as you cannot even vote. I am not talking about possible excess, I am talking about the actual theory, that is, of quantification as being the fundamental criteria of human life and public affairs. A Hebrew text says, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment" (Ex 23:2).

Modern technological euphoria has believed itself to be able to get around difficulties by employing artificial means and with what is known as representative democracy, in which it is not the people who decide who governs but rather their representatives. I wonder really how many peoples want to be at war and to continue to fabricate weaponry, for instance, but the experts who represent them state that the economy and national security demand such sacrifice. We shall put that notion to one side for the following point.

We should overcome the modern temptation to persist in an individualistic analysis. In reality everything is connected to everything else, and we cannot isolate the analysis of democracy by disconnecting it from the rest that gives it support. Democracy is a system that is coherent with its myth.

This predominance of that which is quantitative, starting from the radical change it incurs in the quality of things when a certain threshold is surpassed, also takes it for granted that the people is the sum of individuals and that the whole is the sum of individuals that make it up. This leads to the belief that the common wealth is the sum of private wealth, that is, the sum of parts gives totality (something that, after Gödel, does not work in mathematics except in purely algebraic algorithms). Reality is never the fruit of a sum of parts: the sum of my fingers, my hands, and all the other anatomy will not give life or health to my body. One of the most pathetic modern expressions, in which Marxists and liberals coincide, are words from the end of the second part of the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) by Marx and Engels,

who wanted to create a "[human] association in which the free development of each and everyone was the condition for the free development of all as a whole." The paradox is that to reach this beautiful ideal one had to go through "proletarian dictatorships."

Initially one should ask oneself if this common wealth, in which we all converge, exists. This should be investigated to obtain a concrete answer. Second, is this common wealth truly the sum of individuals' private wealth? Perhaps the answer is negative in both cases.

Hence, the entrance of this unduly quantitative extrapolation to which we are referring. In a numerical series, going from n to n^m takes the homogeneity of algorithms for granted. A State of thirty million does not have to necessarily be governed by the same laws as the organization of a *polis* with a population of around thirty thousand. We have already quoted Pericles; we have said that the *ars politica* in a democracy cannot be an area of expertise. Public affairs belong to the entire population; concern for and management of the common good should both be common affairs. This is not possible outside the human scale. In a nutshell, the principles of classical democracy do not apply to a modern democracy.

The Deterioration of Quality

We are not talking about what Plato and Aristotle had foreseen, that prudence and knowledge are not usually embraced by masses, but rather to that of the Athenians and which, much later on, has arisen when representative democracy was discussed. It is a fact that the proliferation of numbers at a given moment entails a qualitative change, as Marx already formulated. A democracy of 60,000 Andorrans cannot be compared to one populated by 232 or 800,000. In fact, what democracy requires is what I have called and elaborated in a more philosophical fashion: dialogal dialogue and not impersonal dialectical dialogue. And, in the end, dialogical dialogue is translated to dialectical dialogue. If I cannot respond, if I cannot look into other people's eyes, if I cannot say, "Wait a minute, explain yourself," if I cannot say, "I didn't quite grasp that," if I cannot enter into dialogue, there can be no possible dialogue.

Démos, as we have mentioned, means "people" in a territory and not in masses. In a people everyone has a name and surname, there are no numbers. And yet, the number of votes is essential in democracy, the vote, as the word (from *vovere*, "promise") says, one has to talk (to someone who is listening), not to count. In German it is expressed by *Abstimmen*, "discern voices," from *Stimme*, "voice."

This quantitative cancer leads to the inferiority complex that overpowers the mass individual, an insignificant number in a group that cannot be embraced. The awareness of being unique and as such incomparable is lost. Paradoxically, individualism leads to the loss of personality. The fact of people's political absenteeism and the substitution of political *pathos* for concentration on work does not come as being at all strange. "Earn a living" in other traditions means deserve it or enjoy it. In this culture it means work to earn money.

Technocracy

To be blunt: democracy is incompatible with technocracy. We have already insinuated that in its naïveté, modernity has believed it could serve as the second-grade machine because this latter was the result of the ingenuity of man. Paradoxically, the Faustian man has forgotten that its power is so real that his participating creation in this reality is slipping through his fingers—as a certain kind of theology, also naïve, would tell us that divine omnipotence comes to a halt before human liberty. Analogically speaking, modern robotization is also getting out of hand of the very man that "created" it.

I say this to be able to explain the previously mentioned naïve optimism that technocracy that allows human communication and communion is the prerequisite of democracy.

And I believe that this is the most serious point of criticism and the crisis in modern democracy. Nowadays, in reality, democracy has been substituted for technocracy. I say technocracy, which is the application of technology, and not technique, which is art—that is, the capacity to make and do things for the sake of our welfare, pleasure, and comfort. Let us not forget that the word *technique* is related to *network* and naturally with *manual art*, with the sense of *touch* and also there, where we put the *testa*, without speculating now over the Indo-European roots *tekt*, from which "give form" and "give birth" stem machines. I mean those mechanisms built with artificial energy sources obtained through violence toward cosmic rhythm—as I have tried to explain elsewhere. If their laws are not abided by, there would be total chaos, in the same manner as if I wished to stop in midflight it would result in being somewhat difficult. We have to obey the laws of technocracy, that is, accept the power of technology. One of the dynamisms that Richard Petrella explained was precisely this almost irresistible strength of technological values that tell us how to function so that everything will be all right. An example of a second-grade machine is the modern *megalopolis*.

Therefore the individual, the foundation of democracy, is subordinated to specialized knowledge, that is, partial and that does not have anything to do with man as a whole. On the other hand, this individual, to be honest, would know very little if asked about atomic energy, economy, plastics, the chemistry of carbon, and so many other things. And so, how can we give our vote responsibly on these subjects, which are extraordinarily complex and require years and years of study? How can we prepare ourselves, even if it were to just a superficial extent to be able to give our vote? In brief, technocracy has taken over from democracy.

How can we have a solid democratic order constructed over these bases? We have lost the experience of deep human relationships too often. Perhaps this could be learned from the intercultural point of view.

And this is my last point.

Monoculturality

These days much is spoken of interculturality, but at bottom one usually only refers to *transdisciplinarity* with the aim of enriching the dominant culture with outside contributions—something understandable and moreover legitimate. I cannot expel a bad thought—it is as such, I confess. It is the suspicion that this Western culture, so powerful for the last five centuries, exploiting the rest of the world at all levels, is now seeing itself in a precarious situation and wishes to continue taking advantage of wisdom from other civilizations to its own benefit—and that later on, it will of course say that it is in benefit of the whole of humanity. This praiseworthy desire for a world government is perfectly understandable along with the wish for "global ethics," because with this globalization the intention is to put a little bit of order into the current situation, yet the syndrome of universalization still has not been overcome—according, obviously, to our parameters. The limits of democracy cannot extend any further beyond the limits of the culture from whence they originated. Again I say that culture is not folklore.

THE LIMITATIONS OF DEMOCRACY

The transition from plural to singular allows me to say that once we have come across the limit, we have discovered the foundation and its relativity. At the limit the bottom is reached and at the same time it is discovered that the bottom does not belong to us. The limit is at the roots, but these are bedded in human magma that is not the private property of any one individual nor any culture. A North American friend of mine (C. D. Lummis) published a book (*Radical Democracy*) not so long ago that ends with a comment on the myth of Persephone (the Roman Prosperine) in opposition to the legend of Sisyphus to give us hope that despite the degeneration of democracy when it is institutionalized, she herself returns from Hades to new springtimes after Demeter, the goddess of grain and mother of Persephone, convinces Zeus to make Hades, the god of the underworld, free her daughter, with whom he had fallen head over heels in love; but as her daughter had broken fast in the realm of the dead she was made to stay three months with Hades. It is in winter when the grain does not grow—when democracy seems dead. . . . We shall give some farmer's advice to be able to get through this winter.

Isocracy

"We are all the same" is a weak dogma, as we are not the same. This is the cardinal fallacy of so-called liberalism—above all, the market. Isonomy qualifies it, saying that we are equal before the law. But the law is abstract and cannot be fixed. If everyone has their own law, as the paradoxical St. Paul (Rom 2:14) suggests, there is no law. And I say "paradoxical" because in this the gentiles are the same as the Christians, as opposed to the Jews (Rom 3:20; 4:15; and *passim*). Leaving this aside, freedom can only exist among equals, and all men are different.

In consequence, we have to seek a political system for management of the *polis* that takes these differences into account and that does not wish to reduce them all to one single abstract equality before the law. The law, on the other hand, is necessary. I shall quote a lapidary phrase by Lacordaire from 1838: "Entre le fort et le faible, c'est la liberté qui opprime et la loi qui libère" (Between the strong and the weak, it is freedom that oppresses and the law that liberates). Let us think that in what is said to be the largest democracy in the world, India, there are more than 100 million children under forced labor, or perhaps we could say, for every Spaniard there are three children who make possible the competitiveness of the State of New Delhi in the world market. And out of these 100 million, in spite of resolutions from the supreme court of this country, among other protests, between 15 million and 29 million are subjected to real slavery (from twelve to sixteen hours a day hard work along with corporal punishment, etc.) for their parents' debts, which sometimes only amount to 20 dollars—but the interest rises to 120 for 100 a month. Are these the ones who defend privatization and the so-called free market? Just read the 179 pages of *Human Rights Watch* from New York

(the situation is getting worse year by year, as the statistics show, in the exorbitant profits of companies that benefit from this work [*Frontline*, January 24, 1997]). Not much is said about all this, and of course the children do not complain in public, neither do they have unions to protect their rights. This is not a marginal consideration to a reflection on democracy. Countries that are known as being democratic are an indirect cause of this situation, and if the *demos* is not us alone, we are altogether jointly responsible for 250 million children in the world, according to the data from UNICEF (1996), not to mention the 13 million children under age five who die annually from malnutrition.

I'm not going to quote the Gospel on mammon (Mt 6:24; etc.). I'm going to restrict myself to recalling Aristotle, who says that the worst enemy of democracy is inequality in economics among man. If there are rich and poor people, Aristotle goes on to say in the third century BCE, there can be no democracy. The master of Alexandria considers economic difference to be a bigger obstacle than the difference between social levels, classes, or ethnic groups. It would be worth commenting on the whole passage of *Politics* (III.7.1279 to 24, 1280 to 7) in which Aristotle is inclined toward harmony between oligarchy (as there are few rich people) and democracy (in which the poor are in majority), but neither one nor the other alone is vitally interested in the common welfare.

This leads me to revive the words that Herodotus quotes at least once (V.92a.1): "Equal share of power." This means returning to human and not technocratic means, in such a way that it is the people who govern and not the government. Would this be possible these days? This is the great challenge.

The cultivation of *isocracy* entails exercising "political virtue," which, according to ancient sages, cannot be delegated. This is the great contemporary problem we face: taking the step from that which is dialectical to what is duologal and dialogal. One should become aware that specializations are needed in specialized problems—that is, secondary ones in human life, yet the meaning of life is to live it and not precisely dominating everyone else. This is taught very little in schools—despite the fact that "academics" is part of the meaning of the abstract Latin term for "leisure" (*otium*, versus *negotium*—"obligation").

This harmony or equality of power cannot then depend on social classes, on specialized events, on money, or on number but rather on the intrinsic dignity of the human persona. And this does not come conferred by one or more votes, but rather it is conferred to all in virtue of our humanity (*humanness*, *Menschlichkeit*)—the indispensable transcendent factor to which we refer.

Pluralism

We are saying that equality is an abstract concept. Equality already takes for granted the homogeneity of things that are the same. A pear is the same as another pear insofar as concepts are concerned, and the same goes for man. But man is not a concept, each one being unique, and hence irreducible to whatever equality in his own person. Aristotle already criticizes democracy "that those who are equal in one aspect are equal in all aspects, and that because all man is equally free they claim to be absolutely the same" (*Politics* V.1.1301 to 29–31). In the last line in Plato's last letter (863 and 5), which is a farewell greeting to his friend, he says, "And be yourself!"

This authenticity (from *autos* and relating it to the Sanskrit *āyus* [life]) would be one of the foundations of pluralism. Pluralism does not mean mere tolerance for others because they are not yet strong enough to be a threat; it means the acceptance of our contingency, the acknowledgment of the fact that neither I nor anyone has absolute criteria to be able

to judge the world or other beings. Pluralism means that there are systems of thought and cultures that are incompatible among themselves or, to use a geometric metaphor, incomensurable (as are radio waves and circumference, or the hypotenuse and the cathetus, yet "in spite of this" they coexist and complicate matters). Cohabitation is something much deeper than getting along well.

Because of all this, our epoch is crying out for radical change, if we are to avoid the catastrophe of humankind. Cultures coexist but they do not get on with each other, which could be taken as surpassing the dominion of the essence over existence, as the overcoming of the monopoly of rationality over the self, without slipping into irrationality. I do not wish to go back and say here that the Aristotelian phrase coining man as "the rational animal" has been badly translated and even more poorly interpreted.

All this would become very clear if we were to invite other cultures to talks around the roundtable of dialogue, which nowadays is an imperative need if we do not wish to destroy ourselves. This has all led me to speak about the *democracy of cultures* for some time now, without which there can be no freedom among peoples. But I have to come to an end.

The Culture of Peace

I said at the beginning that the challenge of these modern times is shifting from a warmongering culture (euphemistically translated "to be the best," "to be the most competitive," etc.) to a peaceful culture. And by peace I do not mean the absence of war; it is a new culture, a new cultivation of the human spirit and human life that is not based on competitiveness or war. The culture of peace is the culture of diversity, which could be spoken of philosophically under the name of pluralism.

The culture of peace is not based on power but rather on authority. There is an essential difference between power and authority. Power is what I have because I have more money or more modern science (synonym of control), or because I am stronger. Authority is given to me by others, or as it is seen in democratic regimes, conferred to me by others. I acknowledge your authority because, as portrayed in the wisdom of the word itself, you make me grow (*ab augendo*). The culture of peace is firmly based on authority and not on power.

Therefore, the means cannot be money, or specialized knowledge, or having power over others, but rather it stems from authority. Authority, in contrast to power, which can be private property and as such individual, is relational, that is, personal. Authority presupposes a constitutive *us* of the human being. The radical change, which I referred to at the beginning, means an anthropological mutation.

The culture of peace involves the cultivation of the word. Ramon Llull would have us know that nature has provided all creatures with means of attack and defense. Some have tough skin, others sharp teeth, others have claws to defend themselves or to live, in accordance with the law of nature. When man takes to arms he drops to the same level as savage beasts: weapons substitute for claws or fangs, with which he cannot do too much harm. What is the tool, the means with which nature has endowed man so that he can defend his rights? the Mallorcan sage asked himself. It is his tongue, he tells us, with which man talks, the rhetoric of ancient ones, the art of knowing how to talk, of presenting things in this duologal dialogue, within which the dynamics of the word keep on evolving to reach agreement. We could denominate it *logokratia*: the culture of the word, that word that shatters silence, that in speaking creates, that does not repeat what has been said at school or on the television, or that is written in dictionaries. All living tongues are dialects, which have been built through parents talking to their children and among friends. In time, new forms of talking become created.

I would like to conclude by laying stress on an idea and proposing a symbol that could come as an aid to the growth of this new myth of the culture of peace.

The history of the last six thousand years of human experience could be summed up—in a simplification that needs to be viewed from many different angles—in the discovery of monotheism. This monotheism is the belief in the existence of an absolute center, a perfect model. Within this latter we have the key to understanding things. And, naturally, whoever holds this key has power. This monotheism has been fixed in monolithic systems (monarchy, monism, absolute truth, unique systems of general validity, etc.), which have favored the pretension of globalization and the absolute. The great modern challenge is in breaking away from these monolithic systems, stepping from the melody to the symphony, from monotheism to the Trinity, from monism to non-dualism.

In this, our world stemming from Hellenic roots, the symbol that could become useful to us would be the step from the arena to the agorà. Arena is a word of Etruscan origin that suggests struggle, competition, and victory. This arena is the arena of gladiators. The agorà is the space within which one speaks, one meets, one argues, in which enemies—if you wish to employ the word—are encountered: there is discussion, there is acceptance, and it is seen which of the two, three, or however many there are is in the right. Agorà concerns assembly and church. These places in which man can talk without fear should once more be put at our disposal. Talking is not only a transaction that can be done on the Internet; it is the gift that man has, which enables him to live life in full.

* * *

We have preferred to avoid giving negative criticism. Democracy is weak, but this is also why it must be defended against the antidemocratic impatience that is all too often disguised behind messianic ideologies.

There is no doubt that the truth does not necessarily reside in the opinion of the majority, nor does a collection of votes result in the common good. Indeed, from classical Greece to Rousseau, democracy is not essentially linked to the sum of the individual votes of an indiscriminate mass. Political parties were parts of a whole, parts of a discussion that could not be concluded until these parts reached a consensus, which is not to say a single thought, but a shared sense. Party power is not democracy. The individual parts (political parties) are not the whole, nor is the whole simply the sum of the parts. Unanimity does not mean equality of opinion, but the convergence of souls. There is no "power of the people" until the people are "of one accord," that is, unanimous in heart.

This is the myth we have talked about.

This is the faith that gives strength to democracy: the faith that people can become of one accord and one heart by overcoming their selfishness.

This is the strength of democracy: faith in Man. Not the democratic faith formulated by Hobbes, but Plato's faith when he contradicted Protagoras, saying, "God is the measure of all things," this God who is personified in Man.

Part 4

POLITICS, RELIGION, AND INTERCULTURALITY^{*}

A. Interculturality is not just cultural tourism—that is, becoming aware that other cultures, more or less exotic, also exist, and even have something to say. The knowledge of the other is important for self-knowledge, but it does not mean knowing my neighbor as “an other,” for the simple reason that my neighbor does not know himself as *other*, but as *self*. Our knowledge of the other is *our* knowledge of the other. It is not knowing that *self* that does not know itself as *other*.

Briefly, interculturality must not be confused with my knowledge of *other* cultures, nor is it simply a matter of absorbing all the riches of other cultures into today’s predominant culture by plundering the spiritual riches of others as, in the past, their material riches have been plundered. We cannot ignore that the dominating myth of Western culture has crept into the most hidden archetypes of modern thinking, which may be well represented by the symbol of development. Interculturality is, rather, a process of mutual fecundation and learning from other cultures, without losing one’s own identity.

B. On the other hand, “multiculturality” does not exist. The moment I speak, I speak a language, thereby transmitting an entire culture, even if sometimes fragmented and still in the making. Interculturality is not a matter of amplifying my sphere of knowledge, but of changing the very categories according to which I think. I must learn to use the other’s “categories” if I am to see his reality, and, ultimately, my own reality more deeply. It is therefore a change of lenses and not of perspective. It not only implies that I need a geographical or cultural broadening, it is a matter of trying to see with other people’s eyes, in order to have a more complete vision of reality. We cannot remain closed within ourselves.

C. It is here that I introduce what I call the metapolitical level. It is linked to the awareness of the inadequacy of our political categories. Not only are our categories inadequate, but

* Originally published in *The Earth Has No Corner, Felicitation Volume on the 70th Birthday of Dr. Karan Singh*, ed. K. L. Nandan (Delhi: Shipta Publications, 2001), 195–204. Karan Singh, an important politician and cultural promoter in India, was a member of the Indian Parliament when Panikkar delivered this speech (2001).

the very modern notion of the political field itself may be inadequate. This affirmation that politics—as it is commonly understood, that is, as severed from religion—has failed must be completed with the statement that religion too, as it is commonly understood, has failed.

Revelation is not *only* that of Mount Sinai, the Himalayas, the wilderness, or somewhere else in the past. Ecology, for instance, today reveals something transcendent: there is no future for historical humanity if we continue to pursue the current policies. This does not mean at all that we should break with tradition. On the contrary, only by deepening the traditional wisdoms will we be able to widen them.

I would like to offer a historical and a contemporary example of the metapolitical by describing the failure of politics and religion when they constitute themselves as separate entities.

The historical example (simplified as much as possible) is the split between religion and politics in the West some fifteen centuries ago. For the ancients, the fullness of Man included the political sphere. Man is not an isolated individual. Without the *polis*, no truly human being can exist; there can be no salvation without politics. The *polis*, of course, has its Gods and temples. The metapolitical is not only the power of making decisions, it is the art and science of finding possible ways for living the fullness of the human being, who is not satisfied with the mere satisfaction of *lankika* (mundane) desires. Aristotle's definition *zōon politikon* means that Man is not complete without politics. This is why politics was not separate from religion, nor religion from politics. The Gods were the Gods of the city. When a people moved away, they took their Gods along, a piece of their land, and founded a new city. There is no human identity without political and religious identity. It should be obvious that I take both religion and politics in their deeper and not sectarian sense.

The example I would like to quote is that of St. Augustine. He believed, like everybody at that time, that Man could not attain salvation without the *polis*, but the Roman Empire was in the process of collapsing, and Augustine found that, for an immense part of the population of the Empire (women, slaves, strangers, the poor), there was no possible full human life—that is, without political rights. It was then that Augustine proposed his theory of the "Two Cities." It was the only way to give hope to the people. The concept of heaven was well known already before him, but he switched it to the question of citizenship, the *politeuma*: the human fullness—he said—lies elsewhere, although not in an apolitical heaven but in a heavenly city, the *civitas Dei*, as opposed to (or, at least, distinct from) the *civitas* of the political order of his time.

This is the beginning of the cleavage that henceforward will manifest itself in the West: politics as only an earthly affair, and religion for the "other world." To be sure, when this was interpreted in the opposite direction, Erastianism and totalitarianisms of all sorts did arise, remedies that were worse than the evil they opposed.

Secularity (not secularism) today means an effort at reestablishing the union between these two aspects of human life, which for centuries have both schizophrenically gone their own way. This is the question of the a-dualist relationship between religion and politics. We don't need to delve into the past. I am thinking of what may happen to the hundreds of thousands of people emigrating from the villages of India, Brazil, and so on, into the slums of the modern megalopolises, which are no longer *poleis*.

I am convinced that our categories, even when reformed, are no longer useful. As an example I may give the modern cliché of "development." We seem not to have the courage to dispense with this word, and so we qualify it by speaking of "hard development," "soft development," "development of advanced technologies," or "sustainable," "controllable," "scientific," "artistic," and all you may name.

We should ask ourselves: What are the anthropological presuppositions of the word "development"? Is Man a developing animal? Does *Puruṣa* or *Homo* mean that? What would happen if, instead of "development," we said, "countries on the way to awakening" or "on the way to realization"?

I am criticizing the extrapolation of the concept of development to other cultures. I oppose the universalization of that category. Besides, I fear that "development" is becoming a cancer, even in the developed world. When one loses homeostasis—to speak a medical language—then the carcinogenic proliferation of development begins.

Even the positive concept of development rests upon a perspective that is quite specific to our times. I am against turning this word into a more or less universal symbol. I have spoken of awakening, of realization, and I could have said growth, which is not necessarily development.

1. *Peace is human participation in the rhythm of reality.* This is why the dualistic separation between the *pax spiritualis* of so-called religious people and the *pax civilis* of the sociopolitical milieu has deadly consequences. The relationship between these two aspects is an *ontonomic* one, an ontological harmony.

2. *Politics is the art and science of managing public life in order to make the common good of citizens possible, in view of the fullness of human life.* The problem here concerns the criteria and principles according to which this art and science may be accomplished. For millennia, the prevalent myth was that the ultimate principle of public life was a transcendent reality, person, or system that governs the common good—generally represented by the *rāja*, the monarch, the emperor, and the like. There has been an evolution of that myth, up to the present forms of democracy.

The mythical value of God has meanwhile disappeared; instead, the word "people" was installed and democracy was born. But, in fact, nowadays we have a substitution of *democracy* by *technocracy*. What has the power (*kratos*) is not the people (*dēmos*) but technology. Democracy is replaced by technocracy. The *dēmos* knows nothing about the complexities of bioenergy, biochemistry, molecular biology, national defense, atomic armaments, or the rules of modern agriculture—hence the people cannot make responsible decisions themselves; they must rely on someone else. And who is that "someone"? If they are politicians, they are not scientists; if they are scientists, they are not politicians; so that, finally, one must rely on structures that have their own autonomy, which is where the power of the present technology lies: in economy. I recall that a few years ago, during one of those recurring crises that endanger the present order, two presidents (of France and the United States), one chancellor (of Germany), and the head of the Kremlin, within a time span of fifteen days, said that they would like to start a substantial disarmament, but they could not. The majority of the people wanted it, but it looks like technocracy makes democracy impossible.

3. *There is conflict between the common good of one "tribe" (people, nation, State) and that of another, because of the plurality of cultures I have mentioned.* The common good of one is not necessarily the same as the common good of the other. We should not fall into idealisms by thinking that what is good for us is agreeable to all. True politics begins with acknowledging conflict—the tension between what is acceptable to me and what is acceptable to the other.

As long as cultural diversity (I mean culture, not folklore) was respected, there could be a creative polarity. But in a standardized and homogeneous world the equilibrium is broken. One rational pattern of thinking and a uniform "world order" cannot tolerate diversity. We cannot accept that $2 + 2 = 5$.

Once the cosmic rhythms are broken by the continual acceleration of technology, there are no resources for all. We spend more energy than the Earth can recycle.

This brings me to the formulation of a tragic law: within the present technocratic system, a *micro-social progress entails a macro-social regression*. Any modern positive *technological* project in Kerala will have negative repercussions in some other part of the world. Once the limits are reached, and the Earth is not a surrogate of an infinite God, any "progress" somewhere will bring about a "regression" somewhere else.

For over thirty years now, we have been witnessing that the rich become richer and the poor poorer. And this is not matter of good fellows versus bad fellows: it is inbuilt in the system. One only needs to recall the fact that the modern technological cultivation of one hectare of rice uses fifteen times more irrecoverable energy units than the numbers of calories a hectare of rice will give. Moreover, those who cultivate rice without having recourse to that infrastructure that impoverishes the Earth fifteen times more cannot sell their rice, because the other one is cheaper on the market. The Common European Market's subsidies to European agriculture are one of the causes of famine in other parts of the world—since African agriculture, for instance, cannot compete in the world market, so much so that Africa even has to import food! Once the rhythms are broken, it is not possible to reestablish a just balance for all. We are paying heavily for the neglect of philosophy in schools and universities.

4. *This conflict is not only about economics or power, it is also cultural, religious, and cosmological.* We here take interculturality seriously, that is, not simply as a matter of recognizing the fact that Indians, Aztecs, and Mayas have different conceptions of the world, but also that they live in a truly "other" world. Theirs is not a different worldview, but a different world.

If we do not reach that awareness, we will remain prisoners of our monistic perspectives or of our crypto-Kantianism that permeates the present modern and technocratic culture, not only the Western one. Kant's followers believe that there is a "thing in itself," a cosmos in our case, of which each of us has his own vision. This is a monocultural conception. There exist worlds that *are* different. This conflict between *kosmologies* ("cosmology" only means the scientific one) is the ultimate cause of the present crisis. One cannot deal with the present challenges with only a single conception of the universe, and hence of Man. And here the contribution of religion looks indispensable.

5. *The political action can be neither the sole nor the supreme instrument of peace.* Each political position is limited to a certain milieu and has no universal criteria. The theories about one Universal Market, one World Bank, one World Government, Democracy for all, are well-intentioned models of a colonialist mentality, the essence of colonialism being monoculturalism.

When I oppose a World Government, I am not opposing a universal harmony, nor am I against better communication between peoples.

We must seek, together, a middle way between solipsism, which means enclosure, and a world government that would put everything and everyone in the same bag. I am not envisaging a tower of Babel but small cottages where people can communicate on the human scale and eventually attain communion—which is always personal. This may begin to be feasible if, in our approach to these enormous problems, we do not rely only and exclusively on *logos*, and on that which guides us toward a rational world government, but at the same time on *mythos*, whose acceptance liberates us from the necessity of so many controls and laws.

Here is an example. One of the prevailing myths today is that we must not eat human flesh. It has become a myth—in the sense in which I use this word—and a world police is

not required to make sure that, in their homes, people are not eating other people. Such a behavior is not the fruit of a *logos*, but of an accepted *mythos*.

Of course, each epoch has its myths. One should attain a myth that allows for a *res publica universalis* without a world government with its police control. This requires another kind of relationship between regions.

This requires, again, the awareness that what brings people together is not the equality of opinions, but the acceptance of a superior reality. And once again religion surfaces.

6. *Neither religion nor politics, separately, can be the only or supreme instrument of peace*, for the simple reason that Man is a unity, and both politics and religion deal with the whole Man and not a part of him. In other words, *homo politicus* and *homo religiosus* are inseparable—although we must intellectually distinguish between religion and politics. The healthy separation between Church and State should not be confused with an apartheid between Religion and Life. An exclusively otherwordly religion becomes irrelevant for this world; and a solely worldly politics does not have any grasp on people and has no other alternative than to have recourse to the dictatorship (camouflaged as it may be) of those who are in charge.

The *hieros gamos* or sacred marriage between the two (should I have said *maithuna*?), without any dominion of the one over the other, excludes any confusion (monism) and any separation (dualism).

The wisdom of *Advaita* is here paramount.

Religion entails the awareness of Ultimacy, the dimension of Depth, be it transcendence or immanence, and the way to attain that goal. Now, if we make a dichotomy between politics and religion, if we amputate the political side from our humanness—from the belief that, in spite of everything, the other is worthy (at least) of interest, and maybe of love, and that he/she carries an aspect of reality that may seem quite negative to me, but that, however, exists and that I must accept—there is no peace possible on earth. That is why the relationship between religion and politics is not a dualistic one, as if each were on its own; this would turn religion into superstition and reduce the political to a sheer power of using certain means within a particular dominant myth. This is a distortion of both religion and politics. The *ādhibaivika* and the *ādhyātmika* belong together, but without confusion.

7. *Peace is the fruit of a metapolitical-religious harmony*, which implies renouncing all sovereignty, political as well as religious—renouncing any world system, be it conceptual, political, or religious. Harmony is not a concept, it is a symbol. Harmony is that a-dualist relationship between various factors, elements, or components of a whole. In harmony—and this is a serious problem for the mind, but not for the heart—there is no monarch, no supreme principle, no monotheism, no chief. Harmony is contrary to every reduction of reality, or also the reduction of lesser realities to a supreme principle. This harmony (see the last mantra of the *Rg-veda*, incidentally) is what I would call a trinitarian, cosmotheandric, or *Advaitic* spirituality.

8. *The proper instrument for peace is dialogue*. War begins with the break of dialogue. Dialogue can be used either as a weapon or as an intrinsic feature of human nature. The former is dialectical dialogue, the latter dialogical dialogue, and that is why it needs a constant “re-creation”: it is never finished, it is always open and provisional.

Reality itself is polar. It is not a matter of dreaming of an idyllic paradise where everyone thinks the same and shares the same convictions. The great challenge of our times is to pass from a culture of war to a culture of peace. The political instrument of this peace is dialogue,

which is the wisdom of being constantly open to the dialogical dialogue as constitutive of reality itself. Reality is not a thing.

A difficulty arises when, in trying to carry out the dialogical dimension of politics, we face intolerant partners. This is where (echoing Gandhi) if I am not a saint, I am a bad politician. If, contrariwise to all dialectical laws, I do not leave the door open to the fanatic, the intolerant, the fundamentalist, I too entrench myself behind my own position—and, as a result, I allow the alleged enemy to dictate the terms of our encounter in the battlefield. If a relationship is truly relational, it does not cease because one of the two closes up.

Only the powerful can say, "If he does not want to talk with me, he can freely go away." I have seen the reaction of those who have no voice: how much they suffer, how much they endure exploitation, because they can only survive if they let others reject them. I remember many situations where the only way to survive, for an exploited poor villager, consisted in accepting the injustice silently—and provisionally, otherwise he would have been crushed. Here is where the politician should speak and act. The openness to dialogue means that we believe in the interconnectedness of everything with everything: *sarvam, sarvātmakam, pratyayasaṃupṭāda, perichórēsis*. It means the awareness, the *anubhava* I would say, of something that all traditions have seen, and with no need of television.

What else is the idea of the Mystical Body of Christ, of *dharma-kāya*, of *sambogakaya*, of the "body of *dharma*," of the "body of Buddha," even of *karman*?

9. *Peace requires the acknowledgment of pluralism.* Pluralism does not mean indifference to the claims of truth, but the awareness that *satya* *asya satyam* transcends us. Pluralism means the experience of contingency. The relativity of pluralism has nothing to do with the relativism of the agnostic. Truth itself is pluralistic because it is relational, and one of the poles of the relation touches the human shore.

Pluralism implies the insight that we are part and parcel of Reality, not outside or above it. And even more, in the warp and woof of the Real the I-You polarity is constitutive of reality itself (that is my interpretation of the *tat tvam asi*, incidentally). Political pluralism may be easier than religious pluralism, but anyway here is where these two factors of human existence can fecundate each other.

Part 5

THE CHRISTIAN GOD HIDDEN IN LATIN AMERICA*

Gustavo Gutiérrez has published a slim volume containing the first four chapters of a work that, when it is finished, will have sixteen, and that reveals an aspect of the first theologian of liberation theology of which not everyone is aware: that of an erudite and thorough historian, with a good knowledge of his sources, critical method, and historical objectivity.¹

But the book tells us even more. It reveals a fragment of the story of the "Concealment of America."

It is not a biography of Las Casas, nor is it a story of the "failed encounter" with America on the eve of its fifth centenary. It is a study of what I call the *Concealment* of the central motive of the conquest, regardless of all the justifications of the time: Christianization, colonization, the expansive strength of the West, divine providence, etc.

The Discovery was spontaneous and absolutely in keeping with the dynamism of the time. We believe it was well meant. But the Concealment was equally spontaneous and well intentioned. Thus both the famous "Yucay Opinion" (1571) and the documents of the viceroy of Peru, Francisco of Toledo, masterfully studied by Gutiérrez, can say without any hesitation that Providence hid gold in America so that this would attract colonists and missionaries and so that those lands could be cultivated and converted. The idea of a Concealment is not a forced one. Gutiérrez constantly reminds us of its evident origins. The preoccupation with gold, shared by King Ferdinand, constantly emerges even in Christopher Columbus's writings.

It is not God but gold that ensures that Columbus's "discovery" be consolidated. However, unlike what happened later, when the ideal of Christianity was no longer dominant, as was the case with the non-Iberian countries that established themselves in the New World, the Spanish ideal was a religious one. The result was the combination of the two motives, so that it was not gold that attracted them, but the god of gold, an idolatry that Brother Bartolomé de Las Casas unceasingly condemns.

* Original text: "Il Dio dei cristiani in America latina," *Bozza* 13 (Rome) (1990): 97-102.

¹ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Dios o el oro en las Indias: Siglo XVI* (Lima: Instituto Bartolomé de Las Casas—Rimac y Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1989).

Gustavo Gutiérrez refers to an anecdote² from a letter by Franciscans and Dominicans from the early times of La Española, to demonstrate how the *Indios* were led to believe that gold was the Christians' true god: "Then it happened that a *cacique* sent for everyone, and ordered that each should bring the gold he had, and he collected it together; and when he had collected it, he said to his *Indios*: Look, friends, this is the Christians' God; let us dance before it, and then go into the sea and throw it in; thus, when they know that we have their God, they may leave us alone."

Nowadays this is not a matter of a "black legend" or of reflections on national or religious prestige. It is not Spain or the Vatican that is to be defended or condemned. Half a millennium has passed. This is a much more serious matter that regards us all. For this reason, the introductory chapters by Professor Gutiérrez, which we study to our advantage, should place us at a deeper level to understand the situation of our time and our personal responsibility. I would like to emphasize this point.

In 1514 the priest Las Casas is still an *encomendero* in Cuba, but he is beginning to realize that the system is unjust and oppressive. He finds himself facing a dilemma that is the same as the one facing us nowadays, on many levels and in many different situations. The dilemma is clear: either defending *Realpolitik* in the face of an unjust situation, maintaining the status quo, or breaking the "rule of the Sabbath" when this is considered abusive and accepting the unforeseeable consequences.

I therefore emphasize for our day and age: either we acknowledge that an individual can do nothing when faced with the machine of the State, the weight of history, the strength of the powerful, the inertia of the majority, and decide to propose "moralistic" reforms: do not abuse slave women, pay decent wages, limit oneself to "just wars," to the "lesser evil," try to improve situations, make good use of the means at our disposal, humanize technocracy, and remain within the limits of what is possible. This is the "realist" solution. Write an article against exploitation, spread counterpropaganda, create a favorable climate of opinion. Should I quote Erasmus to end this immediately and without debate?

Or "get out," break up, rebel, give a new shape to things, be it a new spirituality or theology, in case. This is the "idealist" solution: break the unjust law, live the alternative, put the fundamentals in the dock, resist the flow, follow the difficult spirituality of *urdhvamsrotas* (going against the flow) of Indian traditions. "The dead fish goes downriver. Only the live fish swims upriver," as North American Indians say. Could I quote Francis of Assisi, Luther, Gandhi, Camilo Torres, to be more contentious?

Las Casas is aware that freeing his *Indios* means putting them in the hands of people who will bring them to an early death. But he chooses the radical option. He takes the risk for himself and the others. It is never easy to live beside a saint, someone who has renounced the "eight worldly reactions," as Tibetan tradition says (deriving consolation from pleasure, praise, profit, and pleasing words; and letting oneself be upset by the unpleasant, criticism, loss, and threatening words).

There are two liberation theologies. The one that attempts to reform Christian interpretation within a framework of Christianity, which is not questioned, introducing a new theological party in a rational and "democratic" game, accepting the status quo as susceptible to reform, recognizing the need to help the poor and practice virtue individually: this is the *theology for the poor*. And there is the one that asserts, "No Man can serve two masters"³ and

² Ibid., 159–60.

³ Mt 6:24.

that we have to decide, despite knowing that every decision is a wrench, and that what is at stake is a renewal, and also a change, in the conscience of that part of humankind that is called the Church: this is the *theology of the poor*.

The author, one of the most illustrious names, not to say the initiator, of liberation theology, does not say any of this explicitly in this fascinating book. In fact this expression never appears in the pages of the book. Gutiérrez only describes Las Casas's dilemma: "To resolve, for the most plausible reasons, to keep his *Indios* and treat them like a father, would also and most importantly mean forgetting many other oppressed by the social order which urgently needs to be attacked at the roots. It is a pure dilemma which appears in various forms, but which still presents itself, both in the necessary fight against the structural causes of a situation of exploitation and injustice, and the immediate consideration for the people who suffer it."⁴

The unsatisfactory position of Vitoria was a lesson for me in Gutiérrez's balanced pages—although the author's existential commitment is nevertheless evident. Gutiérrez does not study the matter thematically, but the opinion he gives of it seems convincing. While Sepúlveda's position is clear (the empire must be defended) and likewise that of Bartolomé de Las Casas (we must follow the gospel), Vitoria expresses arguments of "pure philosophy" (just war, natural law, legitimacy of the Inca kingdom, of the Conquest, etc.).

I am not in any way trying to diminish Vitoria's extraordinary contribution, nor pass judgment on his important historical role. I love his translation of St. Paul's Romans 14:23: "All that is not according to conscience is sin." I would like to underline only that in the final instance the matter was not of a merely speculative character, but an existential choice, although there is a place for everyone in the dynamism of history. Just as one cannot separate politics from religion—although we must distinguish between the two—so one cannot for long divorce philosophy and theology.

This article is not attempting to be a review of this unceasing work, but rather to highlight the importance of this book and let us prepare to receive the complete study.

I imagine that Gutiérrez, in the complete works to come, will only draw an ecclesiastical reflection from the great lessons of history. This is more than enough, since the destiny of the American continent depends on liberation theology. But my comment would go beyond that, and contribute to the fifth centenary with an invitation to prepare ourselves not only for European and Christian compunction, nor only for a more complex vision of that great human adventure that gave rise to the powerful historical reality of the American continent, but also a global judgment on the current situation of the world.

Here are some of the questions that in my view should not be missing from a profound reflection in 1992: Could it be that the symbolic destruction that took place then is happening in the same way today, in what is significantly and, in my opinion, insultingly, called "the Third World"? Could it be that the result of the Christianity of the sixteenth century, which considered itself the bearer of universal and saving values, is the modern ideology of science and technology?

Could it be that still today Sepúlveda, Vitoria, and Las Casas represent three archetypes as much for the political order as for the cultural and religious one?

It is impossible not to project our vision of the world on the interpretation of history; and yet could not a discussion of the various readings of the events of five centuries ago open our eyes to the current situation of the planet?

⁴ See Gutiérrez, *Dios o el oro en las Indias*, 146.

Unless we take advantage of the fifth centenary in this way, we may not be able to celebrate the first centenary of the Moon landings. Are we not perhaps in the position to suspect that the invasion of the Moon was at least as ambivalent and precarious as was the encounter with America? Or do we want to reveal our scars by priding ourselves on trampling on the very symbol of innocence in three great religions of humankind?

Part 6

CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Indigenous and Alternative Practices

I am going to deal with three main points:¹ an inner cultural critique of "development," a cross-cultural reflection on it, and some comments on some fundamental issues. Each of these three chapters is subdivided further into three headings.

¹ In *Interculture* (Montreal) (1993): 27-47.

AN INNER CULTURAL CRITIQUE

a. After an initial enthusiasm for development, people began to wonder whether development was not a continuation, in disguise, of the previous colonial attitude and mentality.

I have here the text of a report on UNESCO projects for 1976. So, not in the last decade, but already in 1976 we were seeing cracks in the orthodox idea of development: "Development has meaning only when it is endogenous, centered on Man, multi-dimensional, integrated, and interdisciplinary, and when it implies a prior awareness of the particular cultural characteristics of the people concerned. In other words, an affirmation of their cultural identity."¹

The intention could not be better, and this is why we have been having an interesting evolution of adjectives, of which it is easier to write a poem than to study the substantive contents, from "straight" development to all kind of qualified developments: cultural, economic, sustainable, endogenous, centered on Man, interdisciplinary. All these concepts, to say the least, are in crisis, including that of sustainable development.

I have often mentioned the inertia of the mind. Another way to put it is the power of the word. Words have power. And "development," today, is a word that has such a power that we cannot get rid of it. That's why, if we do not approve of certain types of development, we say, "Let's have another type of development, one that may work better."

b. If we were to sum up the issue of development on the basis of its contents, not of intentions (sustainable development is mere intention, no content), we probably could state what follows.

First of all, development can be *technological development*, that is, progress, in the straightforward way in which the term is generally used.

Second, it can be *economic development*. It is multidimensional: "we" give you economic power, and you make what you like best of it. That is not about technological development; it is, rather, about a *transfer of technology*: we empower you by giving you money, and you do your own business according to your ideas and idiosyncrasies. You can do what you want. There are no strings attached to our aid money.

The third way to understand development is *cultural, human, civilization development*. In the last twelve years, I have seen seven books (five of them published by UNESCO) under the heading of cultural development, historical development, civilization development, the development of civilization, and so on.

I would like to suggest—as I pursue my cultural critique—that all these developments have delivered no goods. They have failed. And the excuse of sacrificing a couple of generations for the sake of a better and brighter future is no longer convincing.

¹ Report on activities and UNESCO projects, September 1976–April 1978 (A/33/157), 2; quoted by R. P. Misra and M. Honjo, eds., *Changing Perception of Development Problems* (Nagoya: Maruzen Asia, 1981), 82.

We all know the figures: 18 percent of the world consumes 80 percent of all the available energy. Is this what we want to "sustain"? And why not? In fact, if that other 82 percent were to consume the same amount of energy as the remaining 18 percent, there will be no future after the next decade. If every single citizen, or a citizen out of three, had a car, let us imagine the world situation from an ecological point of view!

So, we cannot be sincere when we say that cars are a good thing for us, and thus a good thing for everybody. They may be good for us (as long as we keep them to ourselves), but not for everybody. If the world were to consume the same amount of paper, including recycled paper, as the United States of America does (comprising 6 percent of the world population), in two years not a single tree would be left on the planet.

To produce one hundred calories of food, the traditional agricultural methods used one calorie; the modern scientific and technical methods need fifty thousand calories, if we take the whole infrastructure into account. But it "pays": the global North was twenty times richer than the South in 1960, while twenty years later, in 1980, the North is forty-six times richer than the South.

Is there a way out? If we see the issue from the inside, there seems to be no way out. The problem seems to be inbuilt in the system. And this, not because people are rapacious, ambitious, and voracious. Some are, or may be, but it is hard to believe that everybody is like that. It is with the best intentions that things happen this way. Seeing it from the inside, there seems to be no homeostasis, no self-limitation to that cancerous proliferation. Even a well-intentioned dictator,² a person who, knowing better, would put external limits to that kind of natural expansion, would perhaps make the cure worse than the illness.

c. This leads me to formulate a rather embarrassing and quite tragic sociological law. And I say this with all humility, with all sincerity. And I say this in spite of having heard this morning about all the wonderful work that is being done. Who am I to say that all that is being done is not good work? It is excellent.

Yet the sociological law I am bound to formulate is the following: given the present-day technocratic system in which most of us live, *any technological micro-progress implies a macro-regress on the sociological level*. Any little thing that is an improvement here will have somewhat negative repercussions somewhere else. Antibiotics produce population explosions, subsidies to European agriculture lie at the root of famines elsewhere. The reason is very simple: once the rhythms of the Earth have been broken, once we have reached the limits of the planet from any viewpoint, any increase here will imply a decrease somewhere else. This happens since we do not follow the cosmic rhythms of nature any longer. This is a complex issue; it should not be understood in a simple, bucolic way. Once we have broken those rhythms, any "progress" based on the modern System in a particular area of the world will have negative repercussions somewhere else. Any breach in the cosmic rhythms *here* will have to be paid for *there*. This, in a very sketchy and rapid way, is the inner cultural critique to development.

² Possibly a reference to the political solution to the ecological crisis suggested by philosopher Hans Jonas.

CROSS-CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are three main points here as well. The first is what I would like to call the historical perspective.

a. So much is at stake today. Precisely because we take technocratic world development so seriously; precisely because we recognize the fantastic and stupendous achievements of modern science and technology; precisely because things are happening in our century that had never before happened in the world (e.g., people fly and travel at a speed unimaginable a hundred years ago, and can speak and see at great distance); precisely because somewhere, somehow, the planet is responding to our kicks in a way that we never dreamed of until now; precisely because we take these things seriously, we cannot approach the situation with the usual categories, we cannot do business as usual. We cannot think with the old parameters. We cannot do what the French would call *politique à la petite semaine* (petty politics). We have to enlarge our parameters. What are at stake today are the last six thousand years of human experience.

Given this world situation, all of us who, in one way or another, are overprivileged have a responsibility not just toward our children (important as this level of concreteness may be). What represents the responsibility and—I would add—dignity of human existence in our times is that we are conscious of our responsibility toward the world. We must take the experience of historical Man into account. The last six thousand years of human experience lie inside us.

This implies that we are facing a mutation. And we cannot go back. There is no question of going back to romantic or primitive ideas. We have to use macro-parameters and not just micro-parameters to tackle the world situation. It all is too serious. It is too important. This requires distance, contemplation, study, theory, and certainly, praxis.

There are two extremes I would like to avoid. One approach is to say that this is just another human failing. "After all," one might say, "the Roman Empire collapsed, the Russian Empire has gone down the drain. Something else will come along; it is just a momentary ripple in history." I do not think this is the case.

The other extreme position consists in maintaining that we are at the peak of evolution. This position holds that we are now at the top of the pyramid, having risen from the groves and the caves of prehistoric Man. "And while we have to get out of it, we have to do so with elegance, and without recognizing our failures."

We should not see this just as a ripple in world history. Nor should we adopt an evolutionary fatalism, according to which we have to go on toward some Omega Point, or "we shall overcome" by continuing in the same direction. Sometimes it requires more courage to change direction than to keep pressing on the pedal and going faster.

I am saying this because all too often we take cultures as folklore. We see them as a little dancing here, a little singing here, a bit of praying there. Culture becomes the entertainment of civilized Man, for rest and relaxation after having worked hard. Then it is very satisfying to go to a Greek restaurant, to partake in a Vietnamese festival, or to listen to music from somewhere else in the world—usually taped music.

Cultures are not folklore. If we take cultures seriously, we will not be able to have any intercultural dialogue at a roundtable. There is no roundtable here. It does not exist. If we speak only English, the table is not round. If we pay only in dollars, the table is not round. If we speak only of science, the table is not round. If we speak only of solutions to technological problems, the table is not round.

Just an example. In theological circles today, there is a lot of talk about inculturation, whatever that may be. Here I discover that development also wants to be inculcated everywhere, to be at home everywhere. Development may be a great thing, but it is the fruit of one single culture and cannot be extrapolated. And I would like to show it.

b. The essence of colonialism is, in a word, the belief in the monomorphism of culture. It considers everything only in terms of one single culture, in spite of all its variations. Not much time ago, this meant *one King, one God, one religion, one Empire*. Now this is over, but we go on: *one World Bank, one world democracy, one development, one science, one technology, one network of everything*. The archetypes are not just in our thoughts, they are deeply embedded in our being.

And now, we want to inculcate development everywhere in the world, surely with the best intentions (as most colonial powers had best intentions, I assume).

The idea of development is monocultural, not cross-cultural. The very word "development" reveals an extraordinary etymological irony. It comes from the Latin verb *volvere*—like the Spanish *desarrollo* or *Entwicklung* in German—meaning to roll, to turn, to go around. And it is the same in other languages. For a certain type of anthropology, the word "development" has a meaning. But with other types, development (of any type) has no meaning whatsoever.

Man is not just a "pro-gressive being."¹ Development does not need to mean perfection. Why do we have to be on the go all the time, developing all the time? And when we are fully developed, we will probably get bored! It is a kind of evolutionist and biological pattern of development that prevents us from finding a goal in the way itself.

No wonder death is such a tragedy for people who believe in development, since you are never sufficiently developed. You were "on the way to development" . . . and then, here is death! You cannot be happy. You cannot have peace. You were almost there, and there it comes! How can you rest and kiss your beloved without getting a guilt complex? You have never finished your task. You are not yet developed. You have to be on the go. Fulfillment while we have not yet developed, joy while we are struggling . . . that is not possible. There is always a mirage pushing us ahead, further and further and further.

This means alienation, not only from the earth but from ourselves. We can never stop. Development puts the goal outside, to be reached somewhere else. That is why development deprives Man of his freedom. It imposes development as a kind of moral imperative.

Development deprives Man of the sense of novelty, surprise, uniqueness. Life is not development, but constant creation,² a constant surprise, a constant "something" that avoids the busiest highways. In very many cultures, Reality is seen differently. They do not have any

¹ From Latin *progredi*, to walk straight on ahead. [Ed. note.]

² *Creatio continua*, from medieval Scholastic theology. [Ed. note.]

idea that the human being is a kind of wheel in a machine going toward the new Jerusalem, or the old Jerusalem, or heaven, or somewhere, anywhere—and the quicker the better!

All these kinds of issues, which I obviously can only sketch here, imply that development is not a cultural universal, much less a human invariant. Not everybody wants to "be developed." Not every human group aspires to development.

Some ten years ago, I wrote a page I would like to quote:

Development is not only inadequate from an anthropological point of view, but from a cosmological point of view as well. Its vision, not only of Man but of the world, is a particular vision which may even be right, but which is not the *only* one. And if we take cultures seriously, we have to take into account what other cultures think about themselves, without just wanting to change them. The idea of development amounts to believing that the cosmos is simply an inert physio-chemical body with properties which stimulate Man to make the earth a resource for his own purposes. The earth is not just resources, for many people. Matter is not dead for many cultures. Space is not a box. Time is not movement in the box. Movement is not transit. Transit is not transport.

As another example I could give the switch that took place from alchemy to chemistry. The original idea of alchemy implies transformation, that is, *metamorphosis, metanoia*, conversion. Alchemy was meant to transform the world, basing itself on the intrinsic quality of things, starting with the human subject. That is why you can effect a transformation of the world insofar as you transform yourself. The inner transformation is not a personal preparation or a prerequisite for something, but part and parcel of the process itself.

Let us try to throw in another word, instead of "development": awakening: peoples "on the way to awakening." Awakening would suggest a new awareness of the meaning of life, the reality of the Earth, and the sense of the Divine. Awakening could amount to perceiving better with our ears and eyes and mind, discovering the invisible dimension of things. It is not the privilege of the few who have made "made it" because they are "developed."

Awakening may also suggest waking up from the dream (the nightmare!) of the technocratic world and overcoming the technocratic *trance* of modern civilization. But we cannot hope for people to be on the way to awakening if we do not, as individuals and as groups, struggle for this "new consciousness," to use the popular expression—albeit in a somewhat different and, I assume, deeper sense.

The new consciousness is not only a new way of seeing the world, a deeper level of envisioning things. It is an opening, an entrance to a really new cosmos. It is another sense of reality. It is another reality. Certainly, matter will be always heavy, and apples will always fall downward, not upward. But the falling of the apple will no longer be seen as "an instance of the Newtonian law." It will be seen as tree, apple, sky, earth, and people knowing and even eating that apple. It will not be seen as a lifeless and unreal abstraction. There will be no bodies falling that just happen to be apples. They will be *real* apples, microcosms reflecting the entire reality. And this reality will trigger not just curiosity in us ("Why on earth do they fall?"), it will trigger reflection ("Why do they show such a vital relationship with us and with the entire universe?").

We will discover the holistic relationship with ourselves and with the whole world. We will discover not only the apple's properties and usefulness, but also its beauty and its place within the dynamism of life on earth. Our intellectual curiosity will not only be triggered by investigating one single property of the apple falling from a tree, or its chemical ingredients

and nutritive substances, but by the mysterious living force dwelling within the apple—we will not leave it all to poets, or people in love, or Adam and Eve.

The knowledge of the apple will entail daring to eat it, among many other things. It will be a revelation of the nature of reality, including the deeper recesses of masculine and feminine souls. The apple will be neither just a physical body, nor exclusively a symbol of human sexuality, nor a mere curiosity.

The apple will become the manifestation of the total cosmotheandric Reality. Those handling the apples will not only do so in order to make money, but to enjoy life to the fullest. They will not make a traffic of apples. They will play with them, sharing in the mystery of the apple and entering in a living relationship with their fellow beings and with the entire universe. Every single being is qualitatively and quantitatively unique. We shall not fall prey to abstractions or sentimentalism. We shall enjoy a holistic participation in the mystery of the Real.

With this example, I just wanted to quickly show how one can have another vision of things.

c. The third point in my cross-cultural consideration is that symbiosis is not possible. One cannot serve two masters.³ The conviviality of cultures, which we probably all would like to have, cannot be achieved under the hegemony of one single pattern, whatever the pattern may be—Amerindian, European, scientific, or whatever.

Pluralism implies not only a respect of cultures. It implies self-limitation and an experience of the contingency of the human being and of anything the human being handles, including thoughts, ideas, morals, metaphysics, philosophies, and cultures.

The present-day System is neither universal nor universalizable without disrupting the warp and woof of reality as seen by other cultures. I could elaborate on that, but, as I have done it elsewhere, I pass to my third and final point.

³ Mt 6:24.

SOME FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES

a. The first fundamental issue relates to the very *locus* of the problem. This *locus* is not a "no-man's-land," which does not even exist. There is no roundtable conference. But we now have a table, which is not round, but which exists. It would be unrealistic to think that we could have a neutral ground where we could all meet in the best of fellowship. This is not only realistically improbable, it is also impossible in principle, because that ground would already be tinged with a particular culture. The ground is already "cultured."

That is why our problem is not to be considered *in vacuo*. We have to enter into dialogue with the predominant Western culture of techno-scientific origin. It is not a question of simply attacking it and saying that this is not good for us, or for the American Indians or for anyone else. We have to recognize the fact, and thus locate the problem exactly. This ground needs to be worked through mutual respect and through concessions.

Here the problem is not only theoretical but also practical. Praxis is as important as theory. Politics plays a role as much as sound thinking. This is where the problem transcends the parameters of the meeting of worldviews. We are in a world already tinged with one predominant culture that is open enough, rich enough, and old enough to allow not only for concessions but for changes that may open up points of mutual fecundation among cultures. This would not be aimed at creating a mammoth culture for the entire world, for that would mean falling into the same trap I already pointed out. It would instead mean discovering the sense of life, and recognizing the possibility of human fulfillment without imposing upon one another any *single* parameter of civilization or culture.

b. My second point is that this transformation has to be brought about both from within and, through pressure, from without. That means starting from where we are (using electricity and all the other things of this culture) and responding to the pressure from the outside. This is what Aristotle would call "political prudence." That is why all alternative movements are extremely important, not because they are the solution, but because they are pressure points that may open up new possibilities, about which we do not have any idea or program yet.

I use the word "political" in its most noble sense, not in the sense of politicking or political parties, but in the sense of praxis. I use it to refer to the essential reality of who we are and where we move, and to stress that we cannot simply write down things on paper, or limit ourselves to thinking. And here is where the point of conversion I mentioned in the beginning may be very important for every one of us.

c. The third and last point is perhaps the most difficult to speak of because of the bad press that many of these things have had.

The meeting of cultures transcends culture. To meet in order to understand what development is transcends any kind of idea of development and all its homeomorphic equivalents. It represents a new religiousness, a new mystique, a new consciousness, a new ideal, a new spirituality. It entails the recognition that this is not simply the fruit of our goodwill or of the political forces that move the world—that we are in a drama, in a tragedy, in a comedy, in a play, in a cosmic display in which we are not the only players.

We are not puppets. We are free, but as free players in an event that transcends us in one way or another. It should be clear what I mean. I mean that Man is not alone, nor is the Earth. We all are engaged in an adventure that transcends us all, and that has something to do with what people call sometimes religion or, perhaps better, religiousness.



Part 7

EUROPE AND THE PROBLEM OF THE CULTURAL UNITY OF HUMANKIND*

* Original edition: "L'Europa e il problema dell'unità culturale dell'umanità," *Ricerca* 19, no. 14 (Rome) (1963): 4-5.

WHAT DOES CULTURAL UNITY MEAN?

Culture

By culture we mean here the *social way of living* (i.e., way of thinking, feeling and behaving) of a society existing in a given time and space. Culture is another word for *lifestyle*.

Unity

First we must clarify in what sense we are speaking of unity. Unity may be conceived in three ways: uniformity, agreement, and totality.

Uniformity

Culture is uniform when there is only one way, one form of living.

With today's shortening of geographical distances this uniformity has become not just a possibility, but an actual threat. The more widespread and common a level of being is, the less noble it is and the lower its place in the pyramid that represents all creation. The nobler a being is, the more it is characterized and individualized. Animals resemble each other more than humans, the legs of humans are more alike than their faces, and humans are more similar than angels.¹

Uniformity in a culture can consist only in the sameness of the more primitive and material values. The more material a value is, the more easily it can be imitated. The technique of steelmaking, for example, is easier to imitate than that of yoga, and the use of the wheel is more universally adopted than a certain dance. Motorways can be built anywhere; a particular way of thinking cannot.

One might venture to enunciate a cultural law, parallel to that enunciated by Gresham on money: the simplest and most common cultural values prevail over those that are more differentiated and complicated. When two cultures come into contact, this automatically produces a "leveling out." Differences disappear. And the nobler a value is, the more personal and differentiated it is.

Agreement

Cultural unity can also be made possible by building bridges from one culture to another, so as to enable mutual understanding and agreement. Just as between two systems of coordinates it is possible to find a conversion formula, so, in a certain way, there may exist in this field a pluralistic order that allows different modes of expression.

¹ Ed. note: Panikkar refers to the Thomistic doctrine according to which each angel, as a pure incorporeal being (*forma*), not multiplied by material distinctions, is a separate species.

In the case above we referred to the danger of materialism; here, however, the threat is that of indifferentism and syncretism, or else conflict and intolerance may break out.

In order for cultures to achieve such unity in accord, their means of communication must be clear. In other words, the bridge mentioned above must stand on pillars that are recognized by all and constitute a structure that is either intracultural or supracultural—which brings us to our subject.

In what does this cultural foundation consist? Our aim is to show that only religion (and we would like to introduce a more strictly theological consideration by saying, only Christianity) is able to make such coexistence possible. In short, the same thing that binds people to God (*re-ligio*) also binds them to each other! At the same time, moreover, this should provide the criterion for the authenticity of a religion.

So far, however, religions—and Christianity is no exception here—have always found themselves too closely tied to a given culture, with the result that religious structures sometimes appear to hinder more than favor cultural unity among people. We come back to this later.

Totality

On this earth we will never be able to achieve perfect unity. We might say with Eckhart that, of the four transcendental notions, Being and Good came into existence with creation itself—that is, with the act by which all things derived from God—while One and True will only be realized in the act by which all things will return to God. We have not been gifted with unity; we must achieve it.

Here on earth, therefore, cultural unity cannot mean uniformity. Even supposing that one culture were absolutely superior to the others, to attempt to impose this culture everywhere would be to culturally impoverish humanity. Humankind is a totality, not a monolithic uniformity. No culture can claim the right to become the universal culture—this would be cultural totalitarianism. We can, however—indeed, we must—tend toward a *total* culture. The nearer a culture comes to its goal, the more it is a culture of totality; that is, the more it makes room within itself for other cultures. (Here we should insert a religious-cultural consideration on Europe, since this is where the West finds its most propitious opportunity and its task.)

WHAT DOES EUROPE MEAN?

The European Culture

The historical process is an important and necessary dimension, but we must not overlook the early roots of the European culture. On the other hand, culture is not a museum piece; indeed, all our research should be geared to the world of the future, which is, without doubt, moving toward a certain cultural unity. We cannot say that the West is Christian, it would simply be incorrect. Neither, however, can we say that it is not at all Christian: not only would this be a denial of the origins of European culture, but it would also contradict the actual modern-day situation in Europe. Europe is both more Christian and more non-Christian than the average European may think.

We cannot claim for sure that the West is a *post-Christian* phenomenon—first for the fact that in Europe there are authentically Christian values (not only on a personal but also on a social level), and second because this idea of a post-Christian Europe is the fruit of an evolutionist theory that is not entirely unexceptionable.

One is often inclined to say that in the West a *defective Christian culture* reigns. This qualitative judgment is not only dangerous, however, but also lacks an ideal type against which perfection may be measured. On one hand, we cannot compare the modern-day situation with the past, and on the other hand, it would be presumptuous to attempt to define what a Christian culture should be today. In fact, there is no such thing as a perfect and totally Christian culture.

A third possible reply would be to say that the Western culture is a *mixture of Christian and non-Christian (or even anti-Christian) elements*. This solution, however, is not satisfactory for two reasons: first because, despite everything, culture still remains a real way of living and not just a random collection of elements, and second, because the tragic thing about the current Western culture is precisely the fact that values that are theoretically Christian have been introduced and realized by anti-Christian movements, for example, the *liberté, égalité, fraternité* of the French Revolution, not to mention other more recent and more painful examples.

From these and other similar considerations we may draw the following conclusion....

The Cultural Sin of the West

Viewing the situation from the point of view of the non-Christian East, the religious situation in the West appears to be imprisoned in this dilemma: either Christianity is that which has been set up by Europe (and, seen from this angle, we cannot say it is very appealing!) or else Christianity has proved incapable of transforming Western humankind (which would be clear evidence against the true incarnation of God).

The answer is that in the past history of Europe a cultural sin was committed and multiplied. We use the word "sin" rather than "wrongdoing" because, as with the original sin, it is not necessarily a personal wrongdoing. In actual fact, it is a social sin, which contaminates all those who are born into Western culture. We also use the word "sin," however, because we are not dealing with a natural process but with a real sin, that is, what St. Augustine described as a "turning away from God and towards the creature," and this while remaining within the supernatural mission that the West has been given. Only a culture that has received the call of Christianity can sin in this way. Finally, we also say "sin" because it can only be erased through redemption and forgiveness; mere conversion or a dialectical change of course is not enough. No humanism can lead to salvation!

Formally this sin consists in the loss of faith. Whether we call it secularization, nominalism, humanism, Renaissance, Reformation, or Counter-Reformation, the fact remains that the European culture itself has slowly broken away from God to turn toward the creature.

No sin, not even the original sin (even modern-day Protestantism admits this), is capable of totally corrupting human nature; likewise, the cultural sin of Europe cannot wipe out the good that Europe has done, both within itself and in other parts of the world. Everything, however, is influenced by this sin and, therefore, subject to judgment—not only the last Judgment of God, but also of the Providence that rules history. Culture is also under the cross, and it can also become a "risen" culture. This belongs to our *καὶ πός*.

I offer just one example of this: the destiny of philosophy in Europe. At the beginning it was simply theological, as in all the other cultures. Gradually, however, it began to become aware of itself and to seek for itself the answers to the mystery of Being and existence, refusing to acknowledge a higher authority.

This was, of course, an extremely complex process, in which not even the intermediate stage of considering philosophy as the *ancilla* (handmaid) of theology was a satisfactory solution. Thus philosophy broke away from the living God (even though initially it did not want to deny Him) and turned toward the created being, as if it were possible to find an ultimate and total explanation for beings while leaving aside Being.

In expressing these considerations we certainly do not mean to underestimate the work that Europe has accomplished in all fields. Europe has indeed left its mark on the world, and yet it has not been equal to its task. It has failed, because the sense of Europe was not "culture"; it was "religion." But today the West does not mean religion, it means culture.

The Legacy of Europe

In spite of all this, Europe's treasure lies buried and its legacy consists in what, like leaven, will have to change the world. Like leaven, however, it must disappear in order to penetrate the entire mass. Paradoxically, Europe's task is a religious task. This is indeed a paradox, considering that Europe is the least religious of all the continents, and yet, despite this, its true greatness (without dismissing its technological superiority and social progress) and its historical mission are of a religious character.

It is here, in fact, that the problem arises. We should first outline the current situation, and then go on to describe how Europe might fulfill its mission. But the first point seems to be clear enough to those approaching the subject from the point of view of the Christian faith. For the sake of brevity, therefore, let us move on to the second point.

EUROPE AND THE CULTURAL UNITY OF HUMANKIND

The most specific mission of Europe is a religious, or rather, a Christian mission. No Christian would deny this. But how can it be possible for Europe to fulfill this mission?

Distinguishing

The first operation, which is extremely delicate, consists in distinguishing between Christianity and the European cloak it wears today. This is a specifically European task—on one hand, because performing such a separation violently from the outside would offend charity, and on the other hand, because the Christian faith is always embodied in a certain way and cannot exist, therefore, without a certain guise. This is why Christianity will remain bound to Europe until it can be truly embodied in another culture. In order for this to be possible so that Christianity may become familiar to all cultures, it is necessary for Europe to make this distinction.

Christianity is essentially independent from and superior to every culture, but it needs *one* particular culture in order to express itself and take form. And in this lies the enormous historical tension that involves Christianity and its internal dialectics.

Until now, for a number of reasons, there was no alternative to Christianity's choosing—generally speaking—the Mediterranean culture (the culture, that is, that grew from Greek, Latin, and Germanic roots) as a means for carrying its message. Today, however, its foundations are more extensive and we can no longer claim to provide, based on the concepts and categories of this culture, an exhaustive and universally valid expression of Christianity. Only Europe, nevertheless, is able to make the necessary distinction from within. The fact that this operation bears the sign of the cross and of renunciation is the greatest proof that it is a genuinely Christian operation.

This is closely related to the problems regarding the encounter of religions and the adaptation of Christianity to other cultures.

Ministering

Ministering is a specifically Christian attitude, and is twofold in nature. On one hand, it is the practice of charity, in the sense of providing material and technical aid. Christian Europe has a duty toward the poor, a duty of charity that is far more than a mere economic operation.

On the other hand, along with—and more than—these technical and scientific resources, Europe must bring to other peoples the experience that, even with all these benefits, life does not become better or happier unless, at the same time, prime importance is given to spiritual, indeed, to strictly religious values. In other words, Europe should share something of its own

dismal experience with other cultures and warn them, on the basis of this experience, that Man cannot live by bread alone.

This is a task that must be carried out with the utmost care. Nothing is easier, in fact, than preaching patience and long-suffering to those who are deprived of more than the basic necessities—when we ourselves abound in all the riches of the world. For this reason, the testimony of a true Christian life, even lived in poverty, should have the first word here.

Being Missionaries

We have intentionally used the word "missionary" to emphasize the real meaning of an activity that has not always been a mission in a genuinely Christian sense. Mission, in Christian terms, does not mean forcing or indoctrinating anyone, nor colonizing or civilizing. It means, first and foremost, loving, ministering, and bearing witness to the truth. And the truth is not European truth but Christian truth—that very truth that Europe has realized in a way that is not entirely exemplary.

The fact is, however, that today Christianity is not embodied in any culture, and the West is no longer in accord with its spirit. Consequently, the Man of the European culture finds himself faced with a difficult mission.

Thinking that Christian elements may also be present in a technical-scientific type of modern civilization while being isolated from the whole, the core of the problem is underestimated. This type of view cannot satisfy a Christian conscience. Christianity is not merely a culture; it does not allow itself to be broken down into elements. Only Christ can preach Christ; as St. Augustine says, "Christum ipse praedicat Christus, hoc est corpus Christi toto orbe diffusum. . . . Praedicat ergo Christus Christum."¹

Only the living Christ, present in the Mystery and real in Christians, can transform and redeem souls and cultures. The rest is all sterile naturalism.

¹ *Sermons* 354.1: "Christ himself—that is, the Body of Christ which is widespread all around the world—preaches Christ. . . . So, it is Christ the one who preaches Christ."



Part 8

PRESENT-DAY UNIVERSITY EDUCATION AND WORLD CULTURES

Introduction

The internal evolution of the European university is characterized by three main periods.¹ The first, which understood itself as the *universitas magistrorum et alumnorum*,² came into existence as a syndicate of teachers and students desirous of achieving independence from a crumbling past, desirous of constructing a new order and asserting themselves against an old and collapsing world. The medieval university was an autonomous body against the clergy, the nobility, the soldiers, the tradesmen, and the people; it boldly challenged the monastic schools and their monopoly of learning; indeed, it was one of the most revolutionary steps ever taken in European society—and that happened long ago, in the Middle Ages.

The second period can be symbolized by two words, *universitas litterarum*,³ coined by Wilhelm von Humboldt in Berlin in 1810. The university was no longer considered as a whole, a compact and living sociological body, as a *universitas magistrorum et alumnorum*: a group of teachers and students upholding an ideal. As the fruit of an epoch that believed in the objectivity of learning, this institution became a *universitas litterarum*, that is, an autonomous body of knowledge located in certain places where that knowledge could be pursued and cultivated.

Today we have entered into a third period. Now the university is not mainly a sociological body (first period) or an objective realm of knowledge (second period), but a *universitas alumnorum*, a group in which the students play the most important role. The universities, in this period, are those places reserved for the training of youth, for the transmission of knowledge and of the "knowledge industry" we fancy we need, by means of which an educated elite may have a platform for life, action, politics, and knowledge.

¹ This paper was distributed as background reading for the Conference of ACUCA (Association of Christian Universities and Colleges in Asia) in 1989, where Panikkar presented the keynote.

² A "world of teachers and students."

³ A "world of letters."

We may be entering a new phase of wide-ranging consequences, but we leave aside the present-day groupings (important as they are) because it was in the third moment of the European university that the universities in the non-Western cultures came into existence. In the colonial period, these latter institutions were intended to "produce" a handful of people: enlightened clerks, well-trained to fill all possible intermediary posts in the administration of the colonized country. In more recent times, their function has been the so-called education and uplift of the nation.

Of course, other patterns and types of education prevailed in Africa and Asia, but all have now been superseded by the Western model of the university. In several instances, the language, the curricula, or the professors have been changed, but hardly ever has a voice been raised asking for a change in this basically imported structure. Therefore, in the world's universities the underlying Western pattern persists.

This, our present situation, demands some philosophical reflections.

Western Anthropology—Eastern Education

We begin with the premise that today's university education presents an anthropological pattern that is essentially Western.

The entire learning process is connected with the whole Western conception of Man, culture, and civilization. A great deal of today's uneasiness in both the East and the West is precisely due to our taking for granted things that are no longer certain. These things have begun to cause problems; passive resistance is often employed to prevent their acceptance because the values they embody are no longer self-evident.

The foundations of the Western university constitute the basis of everything that goes under the name of world order, world culture, science, technology, and so on. As recently as 1967, 70 percent of the professors of medicine in African universities were non-African—and the others, I guess, had studied abroad. This poses a philosophical problem, with the most vital consequences for our theme and for our present generation.

In the leaflet announcing the 1967 Basel consultation planned by the FUACE,⁴ there was the following statement: "The age of the European dominance over the rest of the world is—recently—over. But it has left its marks." The scar of this European dominance is deeper than we imagine. Can we be certain that this dominance is decreasing or in decline? Are we not passing into a new epoch of colonialism or, rather, *neocolonialism*?

Let us analyze this new colonial order. Though I emphasize that the word "colonial" has essentially no pejorative significance, a philologist would point out that two words (one positive and the other negative) that in our times are seen as having an almost magical power come from the same verbal root, and ultimately have the same meaning. The words are *colonialism*, a magic term that recalls images of demagogery, and *culture*, a charm that is expected to achieve humankind's salvation. The root is in both cases the Latin verb *colere*, "to till, to cultivate," and the connection between these two words is not just due to etymological caprice. As to their meaning for modern Man, oh, if only we had the time to demythologize it!

What, in the last analysis, does colonialism mean? An examination of the colonial order reveals its underlying assumption that only one pattern, one structure is possible for civilized life: in other words, that culture is *monomorphic*. This implies that all we have to do, by all possible means at our disposal and within the limits of present-day consciousness, is to

⁴ Fédération Universelle des Associations Chrétiennes d'Étudiantes (World Student Christian Federation).

introduce this exclusively valid political order into the whole world. In other words, there is only one God, one religion, one world economy, and one solution or way out of humanity's problems. There are of course accidental varieties, but when we have to deal with important issues, the colonialist attitude holds that there is ultimately but *one* way out. The names vary, and so do the values, but the attitude is the same: God, Church, Empire, Science, Technology, or even Democracy. . . . These catch-words are used or misused to indicate colonialism's singleness of aim.

When a solution to a human problem or a civilization works through us, we have colonialism proper; when they work through means controlled by us, we have neocolonialism. This can be seen in an economic system thanks to which we feel as if we have found the solution, and that there are no others; and those who control it are *us*.

In addition to these two attitudes, there is a third one—supposedly confirmed by experience—which has renounced dominance (political or any other) and control (economic or any other). Those who hold this attitude maintain that the world's peoples have to learn the solutions taught by us, and by no one else. "We do not want to dominate you or to control you, but just to help you. You must realize that there is no other way out but the one we are (tactfully) showing you. You may learn it to be free; but you can learn it only from us. Only things like science, technique, cybernetics, organization, and democracy can make any positive contribution to the solution of your problems, and hence, to the world's problems." Might this not be the neocolonialist attitude of modern Man?

Unfortunately, all the anticolonial movements have the same goal: they are not trying to subvert the colonial order, but only to replace its leadership. The movements of independence are not *ipso facto* movements of renewal. "Independence" means that they merely intend to sever their dependence upon a foreign ruler, but they still generally accept the rules of the colonialist game.

Education, the Last Bulwark of Colonialism

Could it then be that science, technology, and all their appendages—especially in university education, today—form the last bulwark of the colonial order? It is true that, like in the old colonial system at its noblest level, all is carried on with the best goodwill. All is unconsciously taken for granted. What is not done today in the name of Progress, Justice, Democracy, Science, and so on? Compulsory conscription, vaccination, registration, education, even sterilization. I am neither passing a moral judgment nor overlooking "material" differences in contents, but everywhere we detect the same pattern, the identical structure with its "formal" similarities. Is there not, in that pathetic sense of guilt of the West (which the modern East so often misunderstands and even exploits), the suspicion that good intentions alone do not suffice, and that efficiency is not the only proof for the *total human* validity of a particular solution?

What are some of the assumptions of the modern world? If assumptions are accepted uncritically and not counterbalanced, they will bring about a colonialist order. For this reason, any kind of adaptation or reform that does not go beyond superficial modification will just help to increase, refine, and give even more power to that very order. Let us begin with the axiom that *science and technology are universal human values*. Science and technology are supposed to be values, independent of their origins; they are supposed to provide, by themselves, the universal pattern and the solution to most problems of the world.

Scientific Colonialism

The rational form underlying this attitude could be called "scientific colonialism."

Previously, powers like the Church and the Empire colonized the world. Now, Science has undertaken the task. Those who argue that the case is not the same say that, while the other colonial powers were tied to a particular system or order, science and technology are neutral, universal, and within the reach of every Man. But this is just what all other powers believed. And this must be contested. There is no reason to doubt that the solution offered by scientific colonialism against humanity's ills will prove as temporary as its former counterparts.

In the West, there is a primordial conviction that truth is one, whereas reality may be manifold. This contrasts sharply with the Indic intuition that reality is one, and truth pluralistic. We find here a survival and a linear continuation of that objectification: the Roman Empire, Christendom, the British Empire . . . and now, Science and Technology. No need to quote Hegel on the *absolute Religion* or the *absolute Hoheitsanspruch*⁵ that was derived from it; a glance at our present-day world situation will convince us.

When we say Science and Technology, we mean more than just a few devices here and there; we mean the realm of the machine "of the second degree." The machine of the first degree is a tool—e.g., a hammer, which you can handle as you like—which is good or bad according to the use you make of it. But the machine of the second degree is a tool that has a special sort of autonomy; Man has to adapt himself to this machine and enter into its structure in order to utilize it and survive the violence of its power.

My old grandmother once said to a relative of mine who had become one of the first Indian pilots, "My son, when you go out and fly, please try to fly slow and low." She could not imagine that, in contact with a machine, one has to adapt oneself to its exigencies, and not to those of common sense. The machine has its own laws, independent both of Man and of the use Man makes of it. Science and technology were brought into being by Christianity and what I call Mediterranean culture. Without the Christian faith, science could have been neither possible nor conceivable; without the Mediterranean spirit, that splendid combination of Jewish, Greek, Latin, Gallic, and modern elements combined with a Christian factor, what we know today as science would not have occurred and Western culture could never have arisen. Christianity itself cannot be severed from this background.

Let us not forget that science and technology are not just two objects; there exist no objects without subjects. They are not merely "objective" realities that we can manipulate at will; at least, they entail a structure of the mind—a *forma mentis*—and they correspond to a certain and particular degree of human consciousness. The machine is never completely independent of Man; yet it has a special autonomy. Some time ago, I was frantically struggling with Indian bureaucracy to get some arrears paid by my university. When I remarked to one of the clerks that a computer could perhaps do those calculations for him and spare that enormous waste of time and personnel, he answered, "If the Indian mind and mood get into the computer, the computers in India will work just like our *babus* and clerks, not with American efficiency." The real problem is that the Indian mind cannot perhaps be computerized, or if it can, it would be destroyed as "Indian" mind.

Science and technology presuppose at least three very fundamental principles, which are far from being universal or universally acceptable:

⁵ Claim to superiority.

- The primacy of logical thinking
- The reality of linear time
- The positive value of matter

Let us examine each of them.

Substantial Thought versus Functional Thought

To begin with, the primacy of logical thinking is the principle without which science and technology are inoperable. We here define *logical* thinking against metalogical thinking—for example, philosophy and theology—and prelogical or a-logical thinking—for example, poetry. Modern science presupposes functional thinking, or a type of thinking that is satisfied with explanations in terms of the use, place, or effect of anything.

The very word “explanation” is instructive. It comes from the Latin *explicare*: to unfold, that is, to open a folded thing in order to see what lies beneath. Here we have an example of the Hellenic inheritance of the whole West: the preeminence of sight over all else. When you clearly *see* the functioning of a thing, you assume that you have understood it.

Opposed to this functional thinking is substantial thinking, which is not satisfied with the place, effect, or the use of a thing, but wants to know what that thing *is* in itself. Now, everybody can agree that to reduce Man to his mental power, and Reality to what logical thinking discovers, means to castrate Man and to impoverish Reality. We have to ask ourselves if it is really possible to “serve two masters,”⁶ to accept the primacy of logical thinking, and at the same time to take the other aspects of Reality seriously—that is, the sides of it uncovered by other forms of contact with it. It is not enough to have a weakness for poetry. In one’s private sphere a compromise may be viable, but is peaceful coexistence between these two forms of thinking capable of shaping a culture? Once it is possible to speak to someone through a radio, or to have an air-conditioned room, telepathy itself and a certain *yoga* will doubtless become obsolete, even in India.

Western Anthropology and Linear Time

The second presupposition, the reality of time, has a double postulate: (1) that time is linear and not circular, and (2) that it is *functionally real*, that is, that Being is crystallized Time, condensed temporality.

This does not mean that the Christian conception of time should be linear; if we insisted on that, our interpretation of Christian reality would be somewhat one-sided. For a Christian, time is a spiral rather than a straight line—but let us not go into that now. Our point is that the machine cannot work, that science cannot be creatively cultivated without the assumption, or indeed the belief, that time is something linear, irreversible.

Time is real because it matters. Things are a function of time: the past merging into the present, and the present shaping the future in a kind of substantial unity. Time, in other words, is a real link between past, present, and future. Without this assumption, we cannot believe that we can shape the future and really transform the world, and Man himself.

This assumption is important in every respect. The whole advancement of science can be seen in the perspective of acceleration, that is, of a real modification of time. What the machine ultimately does is to modify time, speed a particle, accelerate a piece of lead—a little thing you call a bullet. A bullet does not kill because of its mass but because of its

⁶ See Mt 6:24.

speed, its acceleration. The machine is useful, powerful, and meaningful only because it saves and condenses time, it accomplishes in less time something that otherwise would require more. This is true of the computer as well, and electricity is just the maximum speed that matter can take.

This conception of time is important to Man and essential to Science, but it is not universal and does not even exist in some cultures. We may call these cultures "primitive," but the fact remains that they *exist*. The time of the machine is homogeneous; three-fourths of the human being's time are heterogeneous. To reduce time to a linear succession or condensation, and Man to a temporal being, kills the spirit in Man. This reduction ignores those values that are values precisely because they are so uniquely human. Uniqueness is a constant challenge to time: a unique embrace, encounter, or meeting is something not repeatable. Here, even the memory of a second or possible act like that kills its innocence, beauty, and uniqueness.

Even more, some actions have meaning and value only if they are unique, nontransferable, and thus a challenge to time: such as love, friendship, beauty, and loyalty. No one can really sense personal joy if they are preoccupied by a memory of their past or an awareness of their future. Joy, which modern Man so desperately needs, is an a-temporal value. The very consciousness of time destroys it. Though a great invention, Chronology annihilates a whole dimension of Reality. There are human realities that are not datable. Christian liturgy is not an anniversary celebration!

Does the machine leave room for this appreciation of time and life? Important considerations regarding the "quantitative" and the "qualitative" could be brought in here, but there is no need to do so. For a quantitative worldview, the more (and the cheaper) we have of a thing, the better. For a qualitative conception, the less and the more do not count in the same way.

Co-Naturality with Matter

The third assumption is that of the positive value of matter. Matter is a part of the essence of Man. In recent times, Western Man has been somewhat estranged from his own body; on the other hand, he has felt directly related to "artificial" matter. The advancement and growth of science implies a particular type of relationship with matter that is far from universal. A word of caution to the African and Asian peoples: modern science, at least today, is not co-natural to the African or Asian Man. By and large, the non-Western Man is capable of learning all possible techniques, but he hardly feels that passionate involvement necessary for scientific creativity.

To possess this creativity, one needs a certain co-naturality, a degree of identification with the matter that he is trying to transform, embellish, shape, and make a part of his life, so that the machine, as it happens in Western culture, may be really a creation of Man. When the Native Americans for the first time saw the Spaniards riding horses, they thought man and horse formed an indivisible and compact superhuman being. They foresaw the future: Man and the Machine, a new entity. Not very long ago, "machine" horse-men conquered America; today, the American technology-Man is invading the world. History has its laws, and also its humor.

This passion for matter, for "the thing outside yourself," is not so exciting in many other cultures. This is perhaps the greatest achievement of Western Man, but it may also be one of his greatest limitations. The obvious consequence of this lack of co-naturality is that the peoples of the rest of the world, as long as they preserve their identity, will never be able to

compete with the West in the field of science and technology. They will be consumers and users and, at the best, repairers and imitators, but not creators, not peoples with substantial initiative. Even Japan—which is, at least, the exception that confirms the rule—raises some fundamental doubts. Are we then not perpetuating Western domination by allowing ourselves to be so uncritically “mechanized”?

The World: One or Many?

An analysis of the first axiom could reveal much more, but we turn here to the second, that is, “The world is becoming one, and its only possible survival is through adhering to the Western pattern, supplied mainly by university education.”

The axiom has two parts. First, *the world is becoming one*. Are we sure, really? From a geographical standpoint, we agree; historically, this is not so evident. Culturally and anthropologically, it remains to be seen if unity will be achieved. When the world was equated with a part of its geographical extension, and called Christendom or the Roman, British, or Chinese Empires (those who first used the word “barbarians” to indicate the “outsiders” were not the Romans but the Chinese), it was a more unified world than is ours today. The very concept of *oikoumenē* now needs a revision.

In the world of our times, a double process of unification and differentiation is at work. This can be seen in Africa, in India, and even in Europe and America. In this double process, we see the deep dynamism of our world culture. We should not forget that, in almost every way, the differences between a Roman emperor and a peasant of his time were much slighter than those between a rich European and an Indian peasant of our day. What the European or Western Man can do by means of the techniques at his disposal is infinitely greater than what any Roman emperor could have done in comparison with the poorest of his subjects. Let us also not forget that in actual numbers (not in percentages, important as they are for the statistician), the illiterate, the poor, and the famished are much more numerous than they ever were in human history. The ecumenical movement itself is divergent rather than convergent. Therefore, the statement that “the world is becoming one” should be carefully qualified.

Western Technology: A New Savior?

The second part of our axiom is that *the only way of mastering the situation, or of survival—whether one likes it or not—lies in the adoption of the Western pattern of life*. Only Technology and the Sciences, it is said, can save India from starvation; Asia and Africa can achieve importance in world affairs and overcome their stagnation only by adopting the Western way of life, and so on. This is admissible only if, *first*, one accepts the validity of the axiom, and *second*, one forgets the vicious circle that we begin when we say that modern technology is the only remedy to those flaws that it itself has caused to a great extent.

Undeniably, modern technology is the cause of many of the problems that the world today faces. If, for instance, you introduce vaccination, antibiotics, and hygiene only to the West and not to the rest of civilization, you create an unbalanced situation, which could only be remedied by accepting that civilization in its totality. Think of the population explosion, for example. The atomic bomb, they say, can only be counterbalanced by a nuclear deterrent; but they forget that the bomb is a product of the technological order itself. A radical rethinking is here needed.

Perhaps universities could do something about this, and not just follow the trodden paths. If we find that there is no other way out, we must, first of all, be sure that there is no other

way in. Let us first be conscious of the total human situation, before we decide to follow the way of Western history. This should be a free choice, a decision in conscience, and not just a blind following of something that we take for granted.

The third and last axiom I discuss is that "culture can be taught; education can be technologically handled." Modern Man is indoctrinated by means of mass media and other techniques. We should recognize that this has not always been the case. Illiteracy, poverty, and human degradation have not always gone hand in hand; there have been, and still are, many other patterns of human society. Certainly, an "unlettered" person without "education" *today* is unequipped—I would rather say unarmed—with the necessary weapons, and so he/she is smashed by the inhuman struggle for subsistence. Today it may be absolutely necessary for Man to be literate in order not to be crushed by society.

I pass no judgment; I only draw your attention to the underlying assumption that the manipulation of culture is really possible, and that, in a technological era, culture can be taught and handed over. Education can be technologically handled as well: no one advocates a return to a bucolic and romantic age. But we must decipher the signs of the times in order to discover the modern problem of human relations, and see if it is not precisely due to a certain isolation of Man, to the presupposition that education and culture are something that you can manipulate and pass on as if they were merchandise.

Universities have become museums of culture, on the one hand, or machines of culture, on the other. Do we allow for any other alternative? If culture means to cultivate together, to till the human and cosmic soil together; if learning is not just the gathering of knowledge but the integral growth of Man, I wonder if a *universitas hominum* could emerge from the turbulent soil of our times, and thus usher in a *fourth* period of university history. Our analysis has turned into a challenge—and that is where we leave it.

Presence of Christians, or Christ's Presence

We have raised many questions that are vital and urgent from a non-Western standpoint, and which the non-Western Man is however powerless to answer. After dealing with some presuppositions we take for granted, we must add that—from a Christian point of view—we are also under the spell of another presupposition that is almost uncritically accepted by a majority: the Christian presence seems to be synonymous with the presence of Christians. Clearly, the presence of Christians abroad was once an instrument to conquer, dominate, transform, convert, and implant the Church. Now we say that the Church exists to serve, witness, love, help, and fulfill—though always according to "our" conception, "our" ideal of service, "our" views about how people should be *ministered* unto by "us." In any case, the Christian presence means the presence of Christians.

Here also a vital transformation is bound to take place. The point in our criticism of the Christians of the past—that they were collaborators with the bourgeoisie, the *ancien régime*, capital, traditions, property, and a certain order now obsolete—is not that they were wrong because they were rightist. This would be theologically inaccurate and historically anachronistic. We cannot judge one period with the categories of another. What conservatives say to today's Christians, when the latter equate themselves with the leftist movements, the reformers, the working classes, is that they think that the new order and the revolutionaries belong to the same level. If our criticism is deep enough, we do not imply that the Christians of the past generations were wrong because they were "on the right," but because they were *only* on the right. The Christians of the present-day generations, on the other hand, would be equally wrong not because they are not on the right but because they are *only* on the left.

We should not forget this constant ambivalence in the Christian attitude, this sort of unity between immanence and transcendence that is essential to Christianity.

All this is pertinent to our point. It is not enough to shift from the right to the left, or to get better adapted to the circumstances, in order to embody the real Christian spirit. It is not sufficient to discover that the Christians of past generations made substantial mistakes in approaching other peoples, and to boast that *we* are going to do it better because *we* do *not* want to impose ourselves on others any longer, but only to serve. We should meditate on the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee,⁷ and apply it to ourselves and our present situation. It is here that a "theology of revolution" could give its fundamental contribution.

Here, real faith and confidence in Christ are demanded by all Christians by virtue of the presence of *Christ*—not of Christians. If Christians believe in Christ, the universal Savior and *Pantokrator*, they will easily accept that he is *present* and *effective*, though *hidden* and *unknown* (just to use four adjectives to match those of the Council of Chalcedon) in every Man, society, and religion insofar as they are authentic. A faith in Christ short of this universality will not advance much. The witness and confession of a Christian is not that of bringing Christ *in*, but rather of bringing him *forth*.

We may need a whole new Christology. Christ is more than what Christians can think of, manipulate, bring in.⁸ A Christian is not another type of Man, with another set of schemes. He is only a person who recognizes and collaborates with Christ where other people may—or may not—collaborate under other names, theologies, and ideals. Thus, Christian theology faces a difficult task and set of problems today. No easy solution is seen. We must leave this issue here, because solutions are not theoretical or verbal: they belong to the realm of life, and only by living will we be able to go ahead and open the doors that seemed to be barred.

The Hopes of a New World

The "Third World" Has a Dream

We end with a dream—almost a nightmare—because, seen with a rational mind, everything about it looks like sheer contradiction. This dream, which comes from the "third world," baffles Cartesian reason.

Incidentally, the "third world" in the early Christian centuries was an expression applied to the Christians, who were neither Jews nor Gentiles, neither barbarians nor Romans—the two established worlds. The "third world" was the Christian world. In the irony of modern history's application of this phrase to the so-called non-Christian peoples, is there not a theological hint?

In any case, what the "third world" is now asking is not easily understood. It says: give us education, but not according to your patterns; the blessings of technique, but not technology; the power of science, but not scientism; wealth, but not superfluities; universities, but not according to your model. Yet the West has no other scheme to offer, nor have we any other *living* tradition capable of facing our concrete problems today.

Most university people in the "third world" are like *nouveaux riches*, new converts with the enthusiasm for novelty, or the zeal of the "reborn" who want to enjoy the advantages of their new situation while unaware of the price that they have paid to obtain it. We are just beginning to study the interesting anthropological phenomenon of professors and students from Asia and Africa who project the old archetypes of their tribes, caste systems, and ancient

⁷ Lk 18:9–14.

⁸ See Eph 3:20.

societies onto the new ideals or ideas supplied by the Western society. We find ourselves in a paradoxical situation in which the young people in the West correspond to the classical pattern of Eastern mentality, and the young people in the East are as Westernized as they can be. Neither group is completely successful in acquiring the other's identity.

In the "third world," university education does introduce a rupture with all patterns and psychic and historical archetypes of the other world cultures. We cannot respond to the demands of Science without being shaken in the deepest foundations of our being—in our religious soil. What the West has undergone in a period of three or four centuries—the adaptation to an outcome of its very own culture—is now being enforced on the East in a span of two or three decades. Our rhythms are now at a loss, and without them, we disintegrate. If we could recover our old sense of *relativity* without falling into skeptical *relativism*, a positive symbiosis would be possible.

The first and immediate service the European university could render the East would be to help it to really assimilate the culture that the West embodies, without indigestion and spasmodic reactions. We need help to overcome the new idolatry—not only of well-known "cargo cults" but of more subtle and equally vain hopes. The East asks for collaboration in rediscovering its own ways (not that the East should imitate them, or follow them backward) and carrying them on, and joining with the West at a point still to be reached. The Western university must work with the Eastern university to create a new pattern of human life, which is no more than of one civilization or another. It will be a real fruit of a common effort, a living child of a mutual fecundation, for which a real and not fictitious love is required.

As in any true ecumenism, it is not for any of us to go back to another's partial Church, but to meet ahead in the unity still to be reached. Analogously, we should not just go back to the Western source of science and technology; we should all meet in a more or less distant future—in loyalty to our *kairos* (*karman*)—in a higher unity achieved by our mutual efforts and collaboration. As humble and concrete, this tremendous task implies a special call to the Christians who, being detached from this world and at the same time immersed in history, are in a peculiar existential situation. So, are they enabled to be the heroes of our dream?

If we could really begin to feel, together, that the *universality of true learning* we are looking for is the learning and not the teaching, the longing and not the answer, the attitude of an expectant being, of an unfulfilled creature, of hopeful Man, and not a universal truth, a perfect solution, a magic formula, a new concept or a new structure—if we could be convinced that we have neither the recipe nor the solution, if we could be really persuaded that we are pilgrims, even in our ideas—then we could begin to walk together under the flag of a common goal, in spite of our conceptual divergences. Life is not finished, or definitive; it is still in the making.

The End of European Provincialism

One of the roles of Christians in the university is to help the other world religions—as expressions of the deepest structures of Man—to overcome the Western impact, and to regain a new and transformed identity. It is perhaps the greatest Christian challenge for the university today: to work not for Christianity but for the other world religions. After all, to lay down our lives for the sake of others is not a novelty for Christians. In rendering this kind of unselfish service, Christianity could perhaps get rid of its provincialism.

What meaning has all this for the peoples of Europe? They must, first of all, become aware of the existence of this world perspective. In other words, the European university will continue to be provincial unless it becomes conscious of its "parochialism." Only then will

it be open to collaboration with the rest of the world, where the Western Man is blind, and the non-Western Man powerless. I think that this applies also to Christianity. Nothing but a real symbiosis will yield fruit. The awareness of all this will prepare us for the real issues, which involve a new consciousness, an altogether new conception of culture. We can no longer run the whole world with the rules, categories, frames of mind, philosophies, theologies, and religions that are valid for, discovered by, or the fruit of only one part of the world.

This is *terra incognita*⁹ for all of us. All Christians may have a new venture and adventure in store for them if they take seriously the possibility of this collaboration. Only if we, together, go deeply enough into our own being will we be able to discover those living seeds from which an organic, and somehow harmonious, development may start. Here, Christians may have a test for their faith, if they are able to see the problem—in spite of the fact that it transcends any possible logical formulation (which precisely constitutes the phenomenological characteristic of faith). Only then can we imagine possible lines of development. Our dream is precisely this collaboration between a handful of people of all races, colors, and religions—perhaps the real Christian Pentecost of our era—working together, not only for an improvement of programs, or for the relief of others, but for a reform and transformation of the world. This is the creation of a real pattern, no longer set in the realm of concepts that are taught or projected, but at the very core of human existence: in other words, a new lifestyle.

This is the greatest Christian challenge that the intellectuals—and university people are intellectuals—face today. Faith in God implies confidence in Man as he is. In simple words, if we asked *how* Christ is at work, a Christian would simply say, "Well, He is." Then my advice would be to keep ourselves really *free* so that *He* may perform the task. Only then will Christian hope not remain an empty word.

⁹ An unknown land.



Part 9

Is THERE ROOM FOR THE TEMPLE IN THE MODERN CITY?*

*"OM, I bow to the holy Vastupuruṣa of great strength and valor,
Whose body rests under all dwellings, son of Brahma,
Upholder of the entire universe,
Whose head is placed to carry the burden of the earth,
Who makes all sites receptacles of his presence,
The villages and cities, temples and houses, reservoirs and wells,
Who assures all kinds of fulfillment;
Of gracious appearance,
Support of the cosmos,
Supreme Puruṣa [Person],
Granter of boons,
Lord of dwellings,
Obeisance."*

Pauranikavastusantiprayoga XXV

*I saw the holy city, and the new Jerusalem, coming down from God
out of heaven, as beautiful as a bride all dressed for her husband.*

Rev 21:2

The Role of the Temple in the Modern City

The "temple" in this essay simply means a material place that is recognized as a holy place. I understand by "holy place" not only the place for sacrifice, but also the place for the preacher, the book, the image, silence, and especially the people: the place where Man can be

* Taken from: *Changing Perception of Development Problems*, ed. R. P. Misra and M. Honjo, vol. 1 (on behalf of the United Nations Centre for Regional Development, Nagoya, Japan, 1981), 1:275-88.

himself. When I say "temple," I mean church, temple, mosque, synagogue, tabernacle, pagoda, chapel, shrine, palace, pyramid, *stupa*, *dagoba*, cave, holy grove, sacred garden, silent enclosure, house of prayer, a pedestrian zone, a saint's statue in a square—in short, any holy place. I hope I will study the function of the temple in the modern city in a way that may make sense to everybody: the role of a special place in the city for a purpose that transcends all merely pragmatic functions and strives to help Man to become more fully what he is meant to be.

Our question amounts to asking what the concrete role of a *sacred structure* in the life or the city is. Does it need to be, first of all, a material structure? Is not religion a private issue, a "matter of the heart"? Have we not—East and West, North and South—suffered enough from those types of religiosity that tie religion to political and temporal structures? Can Man still be considered a sacred animal? Are we not outgrowing the age or religion? I do not argue here that it all depends on what idea we have of religion, the Sacred, and the like. I simply try to show some basic points for a philosophy, or a Christian presentation of the human city.

Metanoia, Conversion

The present-day situation is one of *qualitative transformation*. There is a mutation taking place before our eyes on almost all levels of existence. A modern city is not just a large village. There is a certain quantitative growth that brings about a qualitative mutation. Our problem today is not just to adapt Man to the "second-degree" machine, while we were formerly accustomed to the simple "first-degree" tool. It is no longer a mere question of adaptation or correction. Nor is it a question of simply moralizing, and saying that Man has to live a "human life" in a city of five million inhabitants, or to use automation and the splitting of the atom for good purposes.

To run at eight kilometers per hour or to drive at eighty kilometers per hour may still belong to the same scale, but the problem becomes qualitatively different if we travel at eight hundred or eight thousand kilometers per hour. At these latter speeds, Man can now do things which he simply could not have done before. Ninety percent of mankind, only a hundred years ago, spent their whole lives within eighty kilometers of their birthplaces, a fact that had not only sociological but also anthropological consequences.

The growth of a city today cannot proceed any longer by juxtaposition as it has generally been done until now. The building of a city, or its transformation from a traditional to a modern city, should be again a ritual act. In a word, cities are changing, and changing radically. So, the temple in the city has also to change, and to change thoroughly. If the city is a community where people live together, this same description applies to the temple. The relation between temple and city is an intimate one. Therefore it is not enough to change the style of a temple or the orientation of the altar. We must not only change the procedure and the protocol, but also the shape and content of a religious place.

The Greek word *metanoia*, the "conversion" I am advocating, could perhaps be better translated as *revolution*, brought about by a radical change of horizon and by upsetting previously accepted patterns. This *metanoia* has to transform the very sense of the Sacred, as well as the sense of matter and the meaning of "religion."

The Sacred should no longer be the "segregated" portion *versus* the profane, the *profanum*; this opposition must be transformed into a creative tension within every being and inside any situation. The Sacred ceases to be sacred if by it the nonsecular is meant, and the secular is seen as the opposite of the *fanum*, the temple. From a mythical starting point in which everything was sacred, we now revert to a moment in which everything seems to be secular, thus overcoming the dichotomy without blurring the creative tension.

Similarly, matter must no longer be seen as the opposite and enemy of spirit, or as the expression of imperfection, or even as evil, but rather as the very body of the spirit, as its expression and playing field. The human spirit expresses itself in its body, as does the divine Spirit in the world. The intellectual separation between matter and spirit cannot be crystallized into a metaphysical duality.

In order to avoid misunderstandings, let me say from the outset that I would like to use the word "temple" always as a predicate and not as a subject. Or, in other words, when I say, for instance, that the temple is a meeting place for people and not the place for celebration, what I am saying is that, whenever a real meeting takes place, wherever an authentic festival is celebrated, there is *the temple*, the divine and human coming together.

Nor is religion merely a special field of human activity, a set of rituals of whatever kind, but it is that kernel existing in every being, and giving *real* value to any authentically human act.

We may now focus the discussion on our concrete issue: if the role of modern urbanism is to free Man from his many constraints, then the temple has a function to perform in this very process of liberation.

The need for a radical change should not be ignored under the pretext that the optimal conditions for a change are lacking. It is always risky to work out an "ideal" system, and to imagine the role of a "perfect" temple. The temple has to "work" on all levels and under all conditions. Great city temples may still be useful for a long time, but catacombs may also be needed. The house altar may perform a meaningful function, and the dining room may perhaps be the most suitable place for thanksgiving celebrations. No ideal solution is going to give us the real answer. It is not a matter, here, of proposing ready-made recipes or giving technical advice, for this is a matter in which organic growth and the common working out of living experience, rather than of preconceived ideas, is essential.

A city has to fulfill several functions: it has to be place for dwelling, growing, education, transportation, simple human movements like strolling about at leisure, play, and exchange of spiritual and material goods—a place where Man as a person can live in a community. The city is the *natural* place where modern Man has been living, in the West and in the Westernized world. Today, in the technological world, the city is, in one word, the place of civilization. The *culture* or cultivation of the soil, or of the soil of Man, has turned into civil life, civic virtues, civilization. But, in the human crisis of our time, it is likely that we need a new *paganization*, a going back to the *pagus*, to rural life, to village scale, rather than *civilization*, the culture of the *civitas*, the city.

The basis for the following reflections will be an anthropological conception of Man, which I could summarize by saying that Man is not an individual, not a substance, but a *person*, that is, a center of relationships with others, with the world, and yet nonfinite, ever open. Among these relationships, two are now going to guide our reflections: *space* and *time*, not as external conditions but as constitutive dimensions of Man.

Sacred Space

Man is a spatial being. He does not only live *in* space: his life *is* a spatial one, it expresses itself spatially, and needs space. Man has now been alienated from the traditional concepts of space. A new relationship with space has been developed. Nowadays, Man is losing his fear of space and getting nearer to it by dominating it. Space is no longer a barrier outside, but a limit within. The sacred space is no longer the consecrated space reserved for special purposes. The sacred space is the *human space*, the real space that Man consecrates by filling it meaningfully—not technologically.

There must be room for privacy as well as a space for celebration, transactions, and communications. There is something that could be called a social space, and something called a private space; and if, traditionally, the social space was the sacred and religious space, today the private one is replacing it more and more. "Once upon a time," practically all social and public buildings were religious buildings. The ruler was a *sacred* person precisely because he was a *public* person. Now it seems that almost the opposite is the case: the private space seems to be more sacred than the public one, and this latter, the *res publica*, seems to be fully desacralized.

The function of the temple is to provide both private and public sacred spaces, human spaces. The human person is the essential temple. Holy places are to support and develop this basic understanding. The temple of the modern city may well be, on the one hand, the basilica, the cathedral, the big building, even the stadium. On the other hand, it may also be a quiet room in a house, the inner chamber of a compound, the common room of an assembly, an underground railway, or the small chapel of a complex company building.

What modern urbanism has called the "core" of a city (which Italians render by *cuore*, heart) is the real temple, and it should be called so, not because a clerical element is present there, but because—by definition—the "heart" of a city cannot but be its religious center, its soul.

When I say that the temple provides the meeting place of the Human in Man, when I affirm that the soul of the city is the temple, I am not saying that the existing temple *is* that heart, but exactly the opposite: wherever this meeting takes place, wherever Man overcomes his ego-centeredness and is open, sideways and upward, *there* is the temple. The heart of a city cannot be—not mainly—the trading center, or the financial district, or even the confessional chapel excluding "the others." It has to be a space for life; open, universal, human; embodying concrete but universal values, and with a certain priority given to the festive and joyous aspect of Man. It has to be a place for contemplation and celebration. The "commons," the *plaza*, the central square where the elders can discuss, the old contemplate, people chat, the young love, and the children play, where justice can be done, men meet, people pray and celebrate, where—in one word—people can *live*: this is the core, this is the temple, this is that vital center the architect and the city planner should be looking for.

I would like to stress two features of this space: *limited* and *open*.

Limited

There is no space without limits. Limits, and even human limitations, do make the space. We would lose sight of human nature and destroy Man, if we were to forget his concreteness and his "fidelity to the earth."¹ The city temple has to be a limited space, a concrete place. It cannot be just a spirit, a climate, a feeling. It is limited by walls, lights, sound (or the absence of it), a special location, a peculiar place. The temple must not claim to be everywhere.

"Limited" also means discreet, humble, small. The time for majestic temples is, by and large, over. The existing ones may still perform a certain function, and the cities that have kept them have probably preserved the traditions that make them meaningful, too, but for a modern city they are not a pressing priority.

The temple in the modern city wants to be, first of all, a small place for silent meditation, as well as for private and public prayer, where a person can go in order to "regain" his or her soul and a group may gather to sing and celebrate and speak, or simply *be*. It needs to be a living symbol for the Sacred, this deepest and ever-transcending dimension of Man. The

¹ Well-known Nietzschean phrase. [Ed. note.]

temple is not only a place to visit or to see; it is also a place to sit in and be in. A shrine, a monument in a square, a corner in a green area, a small oratory, a fountain, a garden, a wall, a building, a basement or a top floor, a window with a beautiful view in a shopping center—all these can be temples and fulfill the function I am describing.

The limitation of space stands for *interiorization* and inwardness. This space should not lead to introversion, but to intimacy and to the discovery of the inner depth of one's self.

Modern Man needs to learn to be *alone* again, precisely in order to be able to overcome isolation and be "all-one." He needs to enter into real solitude, and only there will he learn not to hate himself and to reach real communication—the first condition of which is having something to communicate.

Open

One of the greatest dangers of any kind of temple is that of creating a closed society, a sect, another pressure group. So, the temple of the modern city will have to symbolize universality by means of spatial openness. It cannot be a private property, nor a closed compound within an enclosure of either walls or virtue, money, culture, initiation, or a coterie of believers. In fact, the limitation of space must not contradict its openness. The operative word today is pluralism—a healthy pluralism that does not disrupt harmony and unity. To realize the universal in the concrete, and to discover concreteness in the universal, is a proof of authenticity and wisdom.

The temple that I am trying to describe is also a place of recreation, as more than one generation has felt: a "festival hall," as it was called at the beginning of the spread of Christianity, when Pachomius's monks wanted to build a church in the village of their community in Egypt.

How to give expression to all this in city planning is, in my opinion, one of the most important tasks of our times.

A whole conception of *liturgy*, that is, public celebration, is implied here. I mention only one single aspect, which I would call communion against the excommunication and the *disciplina arcana* of ancient times.

A peculiar practice of almost all ancient liturgies, and of practically all religions, was that of excommunication, that is, of keeping aside, when not actually throwing outside, those who—for one reason or another—did not belong to that rite. The door of the temple had to be closed before the beginning of the "mysteries," and the noninitiated were not allowed to remain inside. The superiority and sublimity of a temple was symbolized by the thickness of its gates and the difficulty of entrance.

The temple of the modern city has to reckon with a totally different concept: the space is not there to separate but to unite; the altar, the sacred statue must not be segregated, yet they may be kept at a certain distance for spatial and psychological reasons. The liturgy of the temple in the contemporary city is not one of segregation, hierarchy, and excommunication, but of communion.

Sacred Time

Man is not only a spatial creature, he is also a temporal being. This is the stuff out of which he is made. One of the characteristics of modern Man is mobility, speed. He changes his habitat, his place, his habits; he travels, he even flies. The rhythmic pattern of agricultural societies—the seasons, the moon, and even the sun—are hardly of relevance to modern Western Man and Westernized Man all over the world. The city dweller follows—for good

or for ill—his own rhythm, adapted to the pulsation of the machine rather than the beats of the cosmos. The modern city is not only a place to dwell in, it also gives occasions to move and to move on.

The temple of our cities will have to be both an expression of this new rhythm and a counterbalance to it. It cannot paralyze the *tempo* of Man, but neither can it allow human time to be dehumanized and lose its specificity. Most temples are incapable of keeping up with the times, because they cannot put up with modern human time. Time has been frozen and overly "spatialized," sometimes in order to "spiritualize" it, but this makes it die.

I am not advocating ambulant "holy places" with trucks and mobile loudspeakers. I mean, first of all, the experience of time as a human reality, and as an integral part of the person.

It is not by simply reducing his *tempo* that Man will "come to himself"; nor is it by curtailing his speed that the temple is going to achieve anything, but by helping Man to discover his own true rhythm and enter into synchrony with reality, be it human, mechanical, or cosmic.

First of all, Man could easily regain the experience of the heterogeneity of time, the personal conviction that from five to six o'clock is not the same as from eleven to twelve; that not all times are equal, precisely because persons are different; and that to know "the signs of the time" amounts to knowing reality.

Second, time is time, and not space, precisely because it cannot be overseen, walled in, embraced. It is not up to us to *know* time. We have to live time, to consume it, to "kill" it, in order to survive.

Sacred time was, until recently, a *social time*, a time for celebration. It is now *free time*—and personal time is the only possible one for a festival. The festival cannot be forced nor imposed upon us; it has to be the spontaneous explosion of an inner urge, the free manifestation of an inward joy. Free time is not just there because one has not gone to work. Free time is really freeing; it is free because it liberates us from the constraints of inhuman factors.

How to express the temporal aspect of the temple in the modern city is a difficult problem indeed. I may however suggest a few lines of development.

The first observation concerns the sovereignty of the temple over time or, again, the possibility of overseeing the true dimensions of time, thus mastering it. What I am saying is: the temple represents the revolutionary moment in society and in the city. Precisely because the temple claims to embody a transtemporal value, it makes room to change, and we should not be afraid of it. I have spoken of *metanoia*, the translation of which could well be "revolution" if this word had not already been exploited.

The temple must be the symbol of change, and a speedy change when the situation requires it, because passive resignation to a violent situation or mere complacence with an unjust *status quo* can be more unjust and violent than the positive effort to change it. Let us not forget that pulling out an arrow may be more painful than shooting it.

The transcendence that the temple claims to embody allows it to overcome entanglements, to break attachments, and to channel contingent situations toward more desirable conditions. In fact, most revolutionary movements in history are connected with religion, in spite of the fact that, when the temple becomes an instrument of power, the people handling it may easily become conservatives, and a new temple may be required.

Modern city planning begins now to discover that cities, like people, are mortal, and that buildings, like human beings, have a limited life span. The temple should promote a certain consciousness of provisionality, and a dynamic of growth. I am not defending, obviously, permanent scaffolding on unfinished projects. I am pleading for a whole spirituality of *exodus*, an attitude of pilgrimage. A certain transitory factor is indispensable for the growth

and development of human life. The spiritual progress through a Hindū temple—from the gates, through courts and shrines to the "cave-womb" sanctuary—is precisely a pilgrimage through space and time in a sacred place. The place is static but the experience is a journey beyond all forms of experience. And the whole complex of place and experience represents the human corporate Person.

Such attitude could be described as a lifestyle reckoning with death as a normal factor, without being afraid of it or artificially hiding its reality. It is a style that does not despise life, that does not dispense with the effort of building up a better world on all scales, but that considers that the value and the beauty of human life and of all human constructions lie precisely in the fact or their transitoriness, dynamism, growth, and change. It is a lifestyle that does not hunt after the eternal on earth. Ideas are not everlasting, nor are stones or cities perennial. The time dimension should always be remembered: not only as something to go through, but as a factor that itself goes through all existing structures.

In more city-planning terms, it could be said that one of the functions of the temple is to be a real symbol for the transitoriness of the city itself, and of all its structures, which have to be reformed and renewed from time to time. Town planners should not build too-permanent structures; they should provide for necessary restructurings in order to meet the needs of living people.

The Festival

Time is a human dimension, wisdom is to detect the true rhythm of things, and joy is to move—to dance—according to that rhythm. If there were only *one* civic function for a temple nowadays, I would describe it as the inspiration and arrangement of human celebration, of the civil festival. The feast—the holy day, the joy, the antieconomic, anti-individualistic, and antiutilitarian activity par excellence—is one of the most fundamental human and religious categories, of which the temple should be a living symbol.

We are seriously concerned with working for a better world, and rightly so, but we should remember that even more important than to build the world is to live in it, to enjoy it, to *live* the world, and to experience that Man and the universe are so marvelously "made" that, even if our situation is far from being optimal or just, it is anyway a gift, a blessing, a rapture, and a joy simply to live, to be here, to witness this birth, to exist in this hour, and to take part in this divine adventure.

The temple is not only the *place* for celebration; it is also the *time* for the festival. And again, as with the problem of change and revolution, the temple should be equipped to perform this function for a double reason.

First, because celebration can be sincerely enjoyed only where there is a certain unconcern with immediate things and burning problems. Only where a sense of proportion prevents us from being overwhelmed by day-by-day problems can the human heart rejoice and celebrate. But this perspective can only be acquired if in Man there is room for something other than his immediate cares. The temple symbolizing this ever-unfinished aspect of Man provides the ground that makes celebration possible—avoiding the dangers of the would-be festival, the orgy, which tries to stifle the cares of human existence. Celebration is neither a narcotic for our sufferings nor an outlet for our instincts; it is rather an expression of our internal and deepest nature.

Second, and still more important, the temple is the time of celebration because any true festival is the synthesis of three times. There is no celebration without a certain commemoration of the *past* that is reenacted in the *present* view of a hope for the *future*.

restructuring of our lives. All these three times, like the mythological three worlds, are included in any celebration. Faith, hope, and love are its basic elements. Without them, no feast is possible.

The function of the temple seems to me to be fundamentally that of providing all possible conditions for human celebration. Man has to transcend his empirical and ego-ridden self in order to be able to celebrate. It is there that the function of liturgy acquires truly human proportions.

With few exceptions, there are hardly any meaningful civic liturgies today, or, if we prefer, liturgies that are both work and play, a celebration and an event for the inhabitants of our cities. We go on following past traditions, fortunately still live and reviving in some places, but we still find it hard, in our cities, to go beyond rural and agricultural patterns, which played such an important role in the past. They should do so once again in the future, but in a new way. "Civilization" on the one hand and "paganization" on the other hand: two hands of development, to meet our total needs. The human being cannot live without rites and liturgy—and the older forms are, to say the least, insufficient.

Needless to say, when I speak of liturgy and rite I do not mean protocol and ritualism, much less mere "etiquette" of bygone ages. I am pleading for *real* liturgy, which is life and celebration. The preparation of such liturgy would consist in removing obstacles and providing favorable conditions rather than building platforms or scoring a certain type of music. The Spirit blows where it wills,² and we may not know its direction. Of one thing, however, we can be sure: that it blows.

The Journey

I am not saying that the role of the temple is to become an amusement agency. The temple is neither the nurse nor the clown of humankind, though it may be a bit of both. What I emphasize is that feast is a religious category par excellence, and the very fact that, in the West at least, people hide themselves from the established religions when they enjoy and amuse themselves is a bad sign for the vitality and relevance of such religions.

Whatever the reason for this may be, I complete the previous point by stressing that time is not an external human category, but the very stuff out of which Man is made, for the *time being*. It would be a lopsided view to consider Man *only* as a historical being, but it would be equally one-sided to hold that his temporality is something extrinsic to Man.

As with space, so with time: it also needs to be interiorized, or rather assimilated, so that Man can grow. Maturity is not reached by just skating on time but by eating it up, by assimilating it. It is the sacrifice of time that enables Man to overcome time, moment after moment, day by day.

It is not enough to celebrate holidays in a proper manner; every day has to be a holy journey, and every moment a temporal opening toward the fullness of time.

The role of the temple in the modern city has much to do with the constant journeying of citizens in their dynamics of work, of relaxation, of pleasure as well as suffering, in their times of solitude as well as of company and fellowship.

The altar of every temple, the altar that we do not need to build in stone because our bodies are the proper temples of the Spirit,³ the altar—in whatever form and shape—has an inward relation with the human heart (which, incidentally, is the most mobile of Man's organs) and sets the human *tempo*.

² See Jn 3:8.

³ See 1 Cor 6:19.

What modern architects and city planners call the *human scale* could here be rendered as the *human rhythm*. The temple has to offer that moment when our hearts may be tuned up again to their surroundings: people, nature, and machinery. The temple must offer the possibility of a *synchrony*, a foundation for personal serenity and collective peace with the world around us. Its function might be considered that of "attuning," "toning" Man with the biological, the mechanical, and cosmic rhythm. Man has this stupendous capacity of being able to live in a polymorphic world, and keeping this harmony is precisely the duty of a temple. The human journey on earth is *idiorhythmic*. The temple has the mission of a mediator, for it is the mediator between those three rhythms. The temple is the place where rural Man is "speeded up" so that he may be able to "catch up" and not perish in the modern world. The temple is the place where urban Man is "cooled down" so that he may not explode and split his personality into schizophrenic fancies. The temple is the place where the journey is tuned up to the cosmic wheels, so that disharmony may not prevail.

In other words, the temple is that peculiar laboratory where Man loses his fear of himself, of the machine, and of the universe. According to circumstances, this may take the form of a city council integrating a ghetto into the life of the whole population, or of a university reintegrating the "cultured" generation into a new relationship with nature and rescuing them from the ghetto of scholarship, or of a trade union struggling for the *ontonomy* [sic] of human rhythm over and against the demands of the machine and productivity, or indeed of a traditionally sacred place offering reintegration and self-awareness.

To sum up: a city planner also has his sacred task, which is providing room for the *human idiorhythm* in the megalopolis of our times.

The City of Man

The biblical "City of God"⁴ used to be the goal of a great part of humankind. It was so much so that even those who did not believe in it wanted to build on earth that very city of God, entering thus into competition and conflict with the believers. Then—and in this case the clocks of history are not all set by Greenwich—the temple stood for the City of God in heaven, in the skies, in the future, or in the hearts.

The tremendous transformation going on before our eyes is that now the temple does not only, nor mainly, aim at being the eschatological one, but it claims to be so seriously at the service of Man that it is ready to forgo all talks about the City of God, if Man does not believe any longer in the heavenly Jerusalem.

The modern City of Man does not try to be an imitation on earth of the heavenly temple of God; it wants to be a fully human city, and it has given up the ideal of climbing to heaven.⁵ The new ideal is a secular one, not in competition with the sacred but replacing it—restoring thus the original myth in which there was no distinction between the sacred and the profane. All was sacred. Now all is secular. Ultimately, it comes to the same. Sacredness is today concentrated on Man. And Man, ultimately, is the sacred being because he is more than Man.

Cutting very short a long story, I would say that we are now entering a new era, as far as this relationship between City of God and City of Man is concerned.

Curiously enough, St. Augustine, in spite of his dualism of the two Cities, begins his monumental work by saying that the City of God "lives by faith in this fleeting age of ours." The symbol of a city as the spouse of God is a common symbol in the history of religions. The time of the espousals has come, so that both the ideal temple and the

⁴ See Ezek 40ff.; Rev 21:10.

⁵ See Gen 11:4.

mundane city may now become "one flesh."⁶ The idea is this: not only philosophy but also city planning is at the service of Man, and the principles for a philosophy of urbanism will have to be derived from a theological anthropology. Man is the *cosmotheandric* mystery. The foundation of what follows could be summed up by saying that the human being is a personal being, and thus a center of relationships, a crossroad of relatedness, and not an individual, a substance.

As for our concrete theme, I would distinguish three basic moments for the role of the temple in the city: *communication*, *communion*, and *transcendence*.

Communication

Man needs communication, exchange, commerce, in order to live a meaningful and authentic human life. This communication is required at all levels.

I am simply realistic if I say that the driving force in the development of our modern cities is the growth and fostering of such communication. The city becomes a *technopolis* in order to make those exchanges of goods, persons, ideas, and so on possible. Mass media, means of transport, education, and the like are all communication devices for the benefit of news, persons, ideas, goods. Industry and commerce, including of course finance, are intrinsically related to communication.

Now, we know that all these techniques sometimes blur the deeper and more personal exchanges. The mission of the temple is to help channel the flow of communication so that it never reaches a saturation point (as in some wealthy societies where people begin to think it has already been done), without thus stifling those other exchanges that, while being more (or at least equally) important, are more subtle or fragile to "transport."

In other words, the role of the temple is not that of putting barriers against the flow of information, but that of collaborating for the transformation of *information* into *communication*. Without a certain preparation, information can become a foreign body invading our organism, without carrying any message.

This involves a complex function of coordinating human needs, providing a structure for a harmonious development of such needs, and offering the right context in which the aforesaid transformation from information into communication can take place. A certain scale of values and a list of priorities seem unavoidable here.

This seems to me a basic function of the temple: not that of imposing a preconceived set of values, but that of offering a forum, an assembly, where these values can be discussed, forged, and decided upon. The temple should be able to provide such a meeting place. It is well known that not only by discussion may the most relevant values emerge: study, silence, and worship also belong to the process.

The temple strives to make such communication possible, so that the exchange may transcend the mere piling up of goods and become a real communication, a mutual enrichment, a human relation. I see it in very concrete terms. Has not the temple to provide the necessary pipelines for the flow of knowledge, virtue, riches, comfort, health, and joy? Not indeed to level down everything to an egalitarian stagnation, but to eliminate flagrant injustices and inhuman conditions. How has the temple to be reshaped in order to get the necessary mobility and flexibility? This is one of the basic problems of the practical reorganization that is now required.

⁶ See Gen 2:24.

Communion

One of the most invidious assumptions of modern Western culture is that Man is an individual, a kind of atom, or rather a monad (for not even physical atoms are individuals) with only extrinsic or accidental relations with others. Once this assumption is accepted, all efforts at gaining perfection will tend toward self-sufficiency, "identity" in the sense of differentiation from others. It is often said that society is more than the mere sum of its individuals, and a city more than the agglomeration of its elements, but we usually overlook the simple reason for this: Man himself is more than an individual.

The modern trend toward socialization and collectivization is a clear sign of this unavoidable truth and of a dynamism toward regaining a fuller personality in Man, transcending the individual. The negative character of more than one of these movements may be due to an exaggerated reaction against an opposite individualism, or to undue emphasis on external bonds instead of recognizing the primordial reality, which is not individuality but community.

In short, communication is not enough for a mature and complete human life: *communion* is needed. By communion I do not mean a kind of reunion (of individuals) or fellowship (among individuals) but the awareness of an inward and basic unity, previous to the individualist diversification. Communion is not something artificial, but rather a discovering of the common roots and the primordial unity, then helping us become aware that the differences are precisely different ways and manners of expressing that primary unity, like branches that actually differ from one another while remaining branches of the same tree. One of the most important functions of the temple is to provide the occasion for such an awareness.

Celebration, liturgy, and cult are operative concepts here. Liturgy in its most general meaning is precisely the work—the action—of the people as persons, the celebration of the community as such (and not of one individual whom the others follow). Liturgy is not the work of an individual, or of many individuals for that matter, but the action of Man as the *cosmotheandric mystery*.

My point is clear: the temple is the place where such a communion is realized, reenacted, and strengthened. If a reading room or a lecture room, an agency for social change, a garden, a statue in a square with benches, or a club for debates can be city-planning crystallizations of the temple as *communication*, then a festival hall, a dining hall, a central *plaza*, the celebration of a certain feast, and the like could be examples of the temple as the ground for *communion*.

Transcendence

Man *has* an individuality, and he *is* communion and community. But his richness is still greater, his dignity surpasses the so-called common good, for he is also an unfinished, that is, a "non-finite," an ever unfulfilled end, a transcendence.

He is never satisfied, never achieved, and needs—so to speak—an open space and an open sky to give full expression to himself, to channel this ineffable longing of his being.

Not only are birth and death, suffering and decay, more or less transparent windows to this transcendence, but also joy, love, creativity, and the like, are signboards of this vertical dimension of Man.

Once again, I would like to stress that "temple" is whatever provides an expression of all this, an outlet for this desire, and the purpose of a temple is to find appropriate ways of directing this human urge. Nothing (no "thing"), in the end, is going to satisfy the human heart. Nothing is going to give a definitive answer to the human mind—and to avert idolatries, to avoid delusions, is one of the most specific tasks of the temple. This vertical dimension of Man has little to do with a sort of mysterious and dark side of things that claims to

cover—and excuse—human ignorance. Only too often has the temple mistaken the real Mystery for phenomena that are "mysterious" because inexplicable for a certain time. All sorts of obscurantism have, from time to time, grown under the towers of the temple. And yet, there is a real dimension of Man that explains his thirsty condition and restless existence, unfulfillable by any measure.

The temple cannot ignore this vertical, ever unfinished, infinite dimension of Man, and it has to keep this attitude open by not letting any answer be considered total, by not allowing any hope to crystallize too quickly, or any ideal to turn into an ideology. The temple has the delicate function of disappointing Man when he gets too enthusiastic about anything. This has nothing to do with criticizing his noble efforts or with a sort of sneering at human attempts, but it simply has to keep any formula open, so as to prevent any kind of idolatry. "If you happen to see the Buddha, kill him," according to an old Buddhist saying. "It is good that I go away," Christ also said. "Otherwise the Spirit will not come."⁷

The function of the "other shore" is to prevent us from falling asleep during our journey. All the structures of modern urbanism have to be provisional because they also, after a couple of decades, or centuries perhaps, have to die, in order to rise again.

Mysticism, silence, prayer, art, mystery, and transcendence are all symbols of an ever greater and unachieved Reality that is grasped only as we are incorporated in the very process.

How to provide such a function? If our first point suggests that there are people with a special calling to human communication; if our second point draws attention to Man's community character, thus leading us to consider the temple as an embodiment both of sacred solitude and of the community; this third point reminds us of a transcendent element in both Man and the temple.

Certainly, the temple cannot manipulate the Spirit, nor can we try to fit the Spirit somehow into city planning. Space has to remain open, and time unfulfilled.

⁷ Jn 16:7.

Part 10

A THEOLOGICAL MEDITATION ON TECHNIQUES OF COMMUNICATION*

The unprecedented but inspired boldness of St. John the Evangelist—who uses a term so full of pre-Christian sentiments as was *Logos*¹ to describe nothing less than the fundamental dogma of Christianity—offers us a consonant twofold teaching on the very essence of the Christian Revelation: *continuity* with the tradition of humankind, on the one hand, and the radical *novelty* of the Christian message, on the other. Excessive accentuation of continuity at the expense of the second would be heresy, and ignoring the first to consider only the dimension of rupture would be schism.

We cannot understand the *Logos* of St. John with purely Hellenic categories, but neither can we completely disregard them. In fact, *Logos* means "Word" in its fullest sense, which includes both the meaning and intelligibility; its sound, its beauty, and its "material" reality; and even the "speaker" himself. But we cannot deny that in recent centuries, in the West, we have little by little intellectualized and "purified" and demythologized the *Logos* until it has become "pure" intellect, *Verbum mentis* and finally *ratio*. The "Son of God" is then converted into "Intellect" and his "Revelation" into *Bible*, that is, into "Scripture."

But now, by a divine paradox, what we today call "civilization of images" and "techniques of mass communication" put us on the right track to recover the fullness of the meaning of that *Logos*, which was being intellectualized in the consciousness of a good part of Western culture. "Writing" is no longer the only technical vehicle either of culture or of human values. Together with it are sound, image, and movement. That elementary human technique of writing is perfected; it becomes human, more similar to Man; it imitates him and turns into a more faithful reproduction than a direct human communication can realize. For example, the communion I can achieve with a colleague by reading his book or seeing him or hearing him in a film is very different.

* Original article: "Una meditazione teologica sulle tecniche di comunicazione," *Studi Cattolici* 7 (Rome) (1963): 3-9.

¹ Jn 1:1.

It is not a matter of defending illiteracy or taking a retrograde attitude. It is instead a matter of guarding oneself against the "parvenu" or "honeymoon" attitude of a young technical era that believes or can believe it has fulfilled its duty by teaching people to read, or that "writing" is the highest and ultimate criteria (of its kind) of civilization. Perhaps the golden age of writing is already declining and the age of image is beginning, which is much closer not only to Man but also to previous civilizations, including those we scornfully call prehistoric merely because they did not know how to trace phonetic symbols on some material. The word is certainly not the same as writing, nor is knowing how to read a synonym of understanding. Perhaps that Egyptian king was not entirely wrong when he tore his clothes when he knew of the invention of writing because he thought the era of surrogates had begun, with the substitution and the alteration of genuine and immediate human authenticity.²

Much has been written about the "theology of image." These notes on the *theology of reproduction* can be called *theo-icony* rather than *theo-logy* of the icon, as they do not seek to interpret the image (the icon) with the *logos* (i.e., using a strictly *theo-logical* point of view), but more specifically to introduce an accurate *theo-iconic* perspective, accentuating not just the *Logos* of God or our *logos* about Him, but the *Icon* of God and our being as an icon of the Deity.

We develop our theme in three phases—Christ, Man, and the world—which will serve as a basis of our *iconosophical* consideration on the techniques of communication.

Christ, the "Icon" of God

"And the Word was with God and the Word was God," continues St. John's Gospel,³ to reveal then that this same *Logos* is the Son of God, the Christ. At no point does it say that this *Logos* is the divine intellect or intelligence (which does not imply that it cannot be considered as such). Instead, it is affirmed that this *Logos* is "the Icon of the invisible God,"⁴ "the image of God,"⁵ and it is repeated that it is "the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word [ῥῆμα]."⁶ The Son is the same as the Father precisely because He "reproduces" Him identically, He is His expression, His image. "No one has ever seen God."⁷ Christ is precisely the revelation of the Father, his faithful reproduction, his intratrinitarian Only Son⁸ and His First-Born *ad extra*.⁹ "Whoever has seen him has seen the Father."¹⁰ For this very reason, in order not to dim the full and total image of God which would appear in the Messiah, it was prohibited for Israel to worship or make images of God or other beings.¹¹

If Christ is the image of God and at the same time a creature, a man, and visible, there is no image that is not in a certain way sacred. The prohibition of any image is not a mere

² See Plato, *Phaedrus* 64 (274c1–275b3).

³ Jn 1:1.

⁴ Col 1:15.

⁵ 2 Cor 4:4.

⁶ Heb 1:3.

⁷ Jn 1:18; see also Jn 6:46; 1 Jn 4:12.

⁸ See Jn 1:14 and 1:18; 3:16 and 3:18; 1 Jn 4:9.

⁹ See Jn 1:15 and 1:18; Rom 8:29; Rev 1:5; Heb 1:6.

¹⁰ Jn 14:9.

¹¹ See Ex 20:4; Deut 4:16; 5:8; 27:15; Lev 19:4.

divine whim, nor only a sort of precaution for the "stubborn" people¹²: it belongs to the Old Testament economy of preparation. For the people of Israel, the only divine image—before Christ—is on the one hand Wisdom,¹³ and on the other it is Man himself.

Man as the Image of God

In fact, the saving function of Christ consists precisely in restoring Man's divine image. The human being, indeed, was created in the image and likeness of God.¹⁴ The redemption consists in restoring the image of God in us, "transforming us into this same image, passing from a glory to another new glory through the action of the Lord, who is the Spirit."¹⁵ We have been destined to take part in the same "form" as the image of His Son.¹⁶ With great sagacity, Clement of Alexandria calls Christ *imago Dei*, "image of God," and Man *ad Dei imaginem*, "in the image of God." There is an infinite distance between God and Man, and notwithstanding this there exists a link, a relation, something that keeps them together and close. There exists a human-divine kinship, we are of the same race,¹⁷ and even the human body is called on to participate in this conformity.¹⁸

From its very beginning, theology has meditated profoundly on the image and likeness of which Genesis speaks. They tended to see in it the divine *image* of the natural order, which is not lost with original sin, and the *likeness* deriving from the divine adoption, which was lost with it and which Christ recovered for us. *Likeness* has also been interpreted as moral imitation and *image* as ontological perfection, and so on. In any event, a certain point is that being the image of God is the theological essence of Man. His anthropotheological definition consists precisely in saying that he *is* the image of God.¹⁹ St. Gregory of Nyssa contrasts Man as a *microcosm* of the Hellenistic world with Man as *μικροθεος* (micro-God).²⁰

The World as the Expression of the Divine Word

"God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light."²¹ Then "God said"—says the Scripture—and the rest of the things were done.²² Everything is the fruit of a divine word.²³ God "calls" everything, and for this very fact, they exist.²⁴ "He spoke, and everything was created."²⁵ The Christian tradition has called the world the *imprint* and the *sacrament* of God, from the Areopagite to Augustine and Hugh of Saint Victor. The world is the sign and symbol of supreme, invisible Reality; thus, through the divine creation of the world, God's invisibility becomes intelligible for Man.²⁶

¹² See Ex 32:9; Deut 9:13.

¹³ See Wis 7:26.

¹⁴ Gen 1:26–27; 5:1; 9:6.

¹⁵ 2 Cor 3:18.

¹⁶ Rom 8:29.

¹⁷ Acts 17:28.

¹⁸ See Phil 3:21; 1 Cor 15:43 and 15:53.

¹⁹ See 1 Cor 11:7.

²⁰ *De hominis opificio* 16 (PG 44.180AB).

²¹ Gen 1:3.

²² See Gen 1:6, 9, 11, 20, 24, and 26.

²³ See 2 Cor 4:6.

²⁴ See Rom 4:17.

²⁵ Ps 33:9.

²⁶ Rom 1:20.

The world forms a unit with Man, so the whole of creation is also waiting to take part in the total liberation;²⁷ it is united with Man, so strictly bound to him that it shares his destiny.²⁸ Thus it is not only Man's body that awaits redemption;²⁹ we have also been promised a new world and a new heaven.³⁰ God saw that his creation was good and He was pleased.³¹ The Christian conception of the body and matter itself has always been positive. The sacredness of the entire universe ultimately resides in its mirroring character, that is, in its shared nature. Every image, ultimately, is an image—to the *n*th degree—of the Unimaginable (inasmuch as it partakes in Its Icon).

Techniques of Communication

The purpose of this essay is not moral but theological: it does not seek to tackle the problem of the use of these techniques for good, but to study them in themselves. What is of interest here is not the content of what is communicated, but the communication itself; we therefore touch only on some matters.

Writing is undoubtedly able to communicate ideas, and in this sense the other techniques of communication are not inferior to it. There exists an intellectual content that can be reproduced in image, sound, and movement, and then be retransmitted and received by whoever is in tune with that communication. The prerequisite of communication of this kind is the existence of an "ideal" objective world in which the listener can participate. Now, personal communication cannot be limited to participation in an *eidetic* world. Human communication is richer and contains an untransferable personal factor that requires "the presence and the figure"; this, for example, is the case of sacramental communication. In past times there was a debate as to whether absolution by telephone was valid, and recently there has been much talk of the true participation in Mass of a person who watches it on television.

Two fundamental reasons compel us to deny this validity. First, the communication of the grace is linked to physical presence, and that is not applicable in these cases. Indeed, one does not see or hear the image itself or the voice itself, but rather their reproduction.

²⁷ Rom 8:19.

²⁸ Rom 8:20.

²⁹ Rom 8:23; 2 Cor 5:2-5; 1 Cor 15:20ff.

³⁰ See 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1. Allow us, exceptionally, to quote a liturgical text to be calmly meditated on: "Dignum et iustum est nos tibi gratias agere, omnipotens aeternae Deus, Pater, Unigenite, Spiritus Sancte, ex Patre et Filio mystica processione subsistens. Una eademque in sanctam Trinitatem trium personarum substantia, coaeterna essentia . . . nihil ultra se habens, nihil intra se nesciens. . . . Etsi vox non capax, solo praecepto potentiae caelum, terram, maria cum suis formis in generibus procreasti. Sed inter reliquias animantium creaturas ut peculiarius in tua laude viverint, hominem ad imaginem [et] similitudinem beatissimae Trinitatis condidisti, ut conlocatus in suavitate paradisi Creatori serviens, creaturis reliquis imperarit et Tibi fideliter famulando haberit in aliis generibus dominatum" (*Missale Gallicanum vetus*, ed. L. C. Mohlberg [Rome 1958], 85) [It is honorable and righteous to thank You, almighty and eternal God, the Father, the Only-Begotten Son, and the Holy Spirit, you who exist by mystically proceeding from the Father and the Son. One and the same substance in the holy trinity of three Persons, co-eternal essence . . . having nothing outside itself, ignoring nothing within itself . . . Even without any voice, by the sole command of Your power did You create the heaven, the earth, the seas with their species in their genera. But, among the other animal genera, so as to have them more clearly live in Your praise, You shaped Man in the image (and) likeness of the blessed Trinity, so that, after having been placed in the sweetness of paradise, and in the service of his Maker, he might reign over the other creatures and, by faithfully following You, he might rule all other beings].

³¹ See Gen 1:4, etc.

The "voice" or the "image" is not transmitted, with or without wires; what is broadcast is something that reproduces that impression, but there is not the communication of *what* the minister does, but only a transformation of equivalent energy. A "grace" that could "travel" together with this transformation of energy would not be very different from magic. Indeed, the physicality of grace is inseparable from the *theandric* complex that constitutes it. Grace cannot be filtered as cosmic rays or energy can.

Second, sacramental participation differs from the merely spiritual because the former requires collaboration and participation from our body. Now, the human body, the temple of the Holy Spirit, cannot be reduced to a bundle of sensations. The body is something more than what our senses offer us, and there is no real participation of the body where there is no physical contact, *corporal and real*, even when I can "see," "hear," "taste," "smell," and even "touch" using perfect technological means. Intention is not enough, even if it is accompanied by sensation: it is necessary to have that other thing, which is called bodily *presence*. As mysticism demands divine immediacy, so does the sacramental order require *theandric* immediacy.

Techniques of communication produce the same effect in the spiritual order as they can produce in the material one—that is, they offer a possibility to reproduce in us what the author wants to communicate to us, but it is always *our* reproduction and never *his or her* communication: it is a suggestion, an invitation, but not a contact, a participation, an ontological gift. Through technical instruments I can make psychological suggestions, but I cannot communicate ontologically. A communication can be established, but not a communion. Technology can, therefore, help—or hinder—personal divine or human personal contact, but technology can never replace it.

The Theo-Iconic Nature of Communication

What has been said until now means that technology cannot replace Man, but this does not mean that technical communication of this kind has no value. We cannot deny, despite its dangers, the value of writing as a means of communication; but today it is no longer unique. Indeed, modern techniques of diffusion notably broaden the field of human communication. Thus we draw closer to what other civilizations have already realized: that there are values that could be called almost "universal," distinct from the purely "intellectual" ones, and modern techniques of reproduction frantically address these values, alongside those which writing has crystallized. Just think, as an evident example, of "recorded" music that is then broadcast, or the sum of nonintellectual human values that a good film can embody.

But there is more. Not only is any idea a participation in the divine *Logos*, but any image is too, just as it is a symbol of the divine Image. Thus an image places itself almost on a level with ideas, and the artist on a level with the intellectual. Perhaps modern techniques are not too concerned with the intellectual order, but there is no doubt that they advance the order of the image in its broadest meaning. All that "is" is an image of Being; any reproduction is imitation of the Proto-Icon of God. Music, visual images, feelings, concrete human situations, basically everything that in some way *is*, imitates the divine Image of the Son.

All this was fact before modern techniques gave us the possibility to reproduce and transmit images, but our eyes are once again opened now to the simple perennial realities of life, like a second innocence after we have separated ourselves from nature and basic life. It is not only by virtue of his reason that Man is similar to God; it is through the image that he reproduces Him and draws closer to Him. Traditional contemplation had become stylized to the point where it had become a "vision" without anything to see. Man normally encoun-

ters God in contemplative vision, so modern technology can reeducate us to "see." Modern Man, who had to a great degree allowed his cosmic sense to wither—who no longer heard the music of the woods, the symphony of nature, and the beauty of pure human life without cultural frills—learns these things once again at the school of communication techniques, which permit him to "see" again that of which what he had lost sight.

Not only that. It is not a matter of a simple return to an innocent "primitive" state. Modern techniques permit the broadening and deepening of the field of vision and therefore of contemplation.

There also exists a kind of human creation that carries out the dynamics of image. As Adam engendered Abel in his image and likeness,³² Man "creates" creatures in his image and likeness—although, as likeness to the Creator can be lost, so there exists the terrible technical possibility of generating monsters that end by devouring their own parents.

Mass Media and Man's Salvation

Technology is, in itself and of itself, morally ambivalent (it can be used for moral good or evil), ontologically good and supernaturally indifferent. We could almost say, if we were not afraid of using too strong an expression, that it is impotent. Both the pessimism, of a Jansenist stamp—which sees in technology the work of the devil or at least almost insurmountable temptation—and the optimism, of a naturalistic type—which states that technology will usher in a golden age on earth, or will at least aid the salvation of Man and the establishment of the kingdom of God—seem to depart from correct Christian evaluation of things.

From the point of view of the preaching of the Christian message, these techniques could perhaps serve as a preparation, as a good book can offer an opportunity for grace, but they cannot go any further. And, if they wanted to substitute personal action or the testimony of life and blood, they would translate into paralyzing techniques, although morally their content and even their intention were irreproachable.

For the reasons indicated in the two previous paragraphs, it does not seem possible to apply the famous Pauline phrase *fides ex auditu* ("Faith comes from listening to the preaching")³³ to the type of social communication obtainable with these means. In the first place, the Apostle's reference to the prophet Isaiah, "Lord, who has believed our message?"³⁴ places the phrase in a very particular context. Furthermore, the continuation of the same phrase absolutely excludes its extension to fields other than the liturgical one, that is, fields extraneous to the action of Christ in us, as "faith comes from hearing, and hearing comes from the word of Christ."³⁵ And this word is the living word that, through the action of the Church, is liturgical action that He drops into Men's hearts.

The preaching of the message, moreover, presupposes a preacher, a human messenger who cannot be in any way replaced.³⁶ In the same context, St. Paul reminds us again of the same prophet: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"³⁷ The presence of the messenger's feet seems to be something more than a simple metaphor. The transmission of faith belongs to the sacramental mystery of the Church, and this is a

³² Gen 5:3.

³³ Rom 10:17.

³⁴ Rom 10:16; Is 53:1.

³⁵ Or "of God," according to another version of Rom 10:17.

³⁶ Rom 10:14.

³⁷ Rom 10:15; Is 52:7.

theandric mystery that cannot leave out Man and entrust its message to a technological instrument. The latter can prepare the way and clear the paths, but never substitute the fragile, dusty feet of human messengers burdened with the very weight of God. A disc can never replace the liturgical "service of the Word,"³⁸ precisely because the *logos* is something more than idea and sound.

True theology lies beyond pessimism and optimism, which, besides being two concepts relative to each other and relative to a more or less conscious expectation, belong principally to the pragmatic order and not to the ontological order of theology. *Pessimists* should be reminded that God left the world in men's hands³⁹ and that He put them on earth so that they might work and transform it,⁴⁰ thus aiding the return of all things to God⁴¹ through their reordering in and through Christ.⁴² They need to be told that the moral ambivalence of technology confers on Man, priest of the cosmos, the extraordinary responsibility of using it for good ends—an even greater responsibility in that it cannot be denied that, in current circumstances, the almost cancerous growth of the technological mentality and the staggering power of its achievements represent the strongest temptation of the contemporary world. But in order to resist temptation it is not necessary to amputate a limb or diminish the human being's techno-scientific creation.

Optimists should be reminded that there exists the possibility of conquering the world and losing one's very soul,⁴³ and that even amputation can sometimes be necessary⁴⁴ without even excluding those who became eunuchs for the kingdom of God.⁴⁵ They should be reminded not only that the ambivalence we have mentioned is in fact negatively employed due to the very characteristics of our civilization, which was born from an apostasy and as a reaction, but also the radical impotence of the techno-scientific order with regard to salvation.

To complain that we do not have an audio recording of Christ's parables or a filmed report of his Passion is equivalent to being scandalized by the fact that he did not come down from the cross or save himself.⁴⁶ Even were someone to return from the dead, he would not be believed,⁴⁷ because the testimony of salvation is supernatural, or to be more precise, strictly theandric—that is, sacramental.

The Fullness of Time is not the Era of modern technology, but that in which Christ appeared on earth.⁴⁸ He has not prevented us from using technology, but the fact that he did not use it as a means of spreading his message makes us think that it is not essential. Furthermore, it is convenient that he has gone,⁴⁹ without anyway leaving us as orphans,⁵⁰ because, as well as sending us his Spirit,⁵¹ he himself remained present in the sacrament of his church in a total eschatological fullness (Eucharist).

³⁸ Acts 6:4.

³⁹ Cf. Qo 3:11 according to the Vulgate.

⁴⁰ See Gen 2:15; Qo 7:16, etc.

⁴¹ See Acts 3:21.

⁴² See Eph 1:10.

⁴³ Mk 8:36.

⁴⁴ Mt 18:8; Mk 9:44.

⁴⁵ Mt 19:12.

⁴⁶ Mt 27:42.

⁴⁷ Lk 16:31.

⁴⁸ Gal 4:4; Eph 1:10; 1 Pet 1:20; Heb 1:2.

⁴⁹ Jn 16:7.

⁵⁰ Jn 14:18.

⁵¹ Jn 14:17; 16:13, etc.

I repeat: the fact that technology is impotent, and that it is still true that God did not and does not like saving Man through human wisdom but with the foolishness of the cross,⁵² does not mean that it cannot or should not be used. Even Samson used force, himself dying to save his people.⁵³ This is not a Christian novelty.⁵⁴

The Christian mission of technology cannot be an exception to any other way of evangelization. This is Christian realism.

⁵² See 1 Cor 1:21, etc.

⁵³ See Judg 16:30.

⁵⁴ See Jn 12:24; 18:14, etc.

Part 11

A RELIGIOUS MEDITATION ON AYODHYA

Ayodhya was, and still is, a sacred place for Muslims: they built a mosque on its ground.¹ Ayodhya was also believed to be a former sacred place for Hindus: that is why they (some of them) demolished the mosque.

They claim that, before the Muslim "occupation," on that sacred soil there was a Hindu temple. It is almost sure that, if the Hindu temple was built there (in case), it was built on a pre-Hindu sacred shrine. So, we may call it a proto-Hindu holy place. It is certain that the historical Hindu cult of Rāma was not there since the beginning of time. If the place was sacred, it was sacred before Hinduism—and it will remain sacred after Islam.

Precisely as we can easily criticize a certain Christian vision according to which Christianity is the achievement of all religions, as the so-called fulfillment theology used to defend, we should criticize the view according to which Hinduism is the fulfillment of the so-called tribal, *Dravidian*, or proto-Indic forms of religions—in spite of the fact that there is much to say about a primordial human religiousness. Yet each religious tradition has its concrete boundaries and geographic-historical limitations.

In one word: no religion has a monopoly on Religion. We may call this latter "religiousness" for the sake of clearness. Religiousness is the religious dimension of Man, then expressed in institutionalized religions or in less established forms.

The *Adivasis* also could make a claim on that holy spot. They have not done it either because any place of worship is good for them, or because they carried no weight in this matter—as they hardly do in any matter in the modern world. We call ourselves "civilized" because we live in *civitates*, in cities, and we call tribal people "savages" because they live in forests, which is what the word means (from Latin *silva*). We should begin with changing our language.

India is a *secular* State, not a *profane* State. I speak of *sacred secularity*, not secularism. Secularity stands for the conviction that the spatiotemporal structures of the world are not irrelevant for the human being; they are essential to religious life, and even necessary to reach the ultimate destiny of Man—in whatever way this destiny may be conceived.

¹ From *Journal of Dharma* 25, no. 1 (Bangalore) (2000).

I may continue this religious reflection using a Christic language. This language belongs to what I call "Christianness" as a particular form of religious experience, not necessarily identical to what is generally called Christianity as an institutionalized religion. Christianity is not involved in the Ayodhya affair, but the religious experience of any human being is.

Ayodhya is not a private affair between Hindus and Muslims. Both communities accept and recognize transcendence. And transcendence, by definition, is nobody's exclusive and private property. They do not dispute a piece of soil, but that particular spot with a unique value for them because it is a place where transcendence shines in a special way. They dispute a sacred place, not a spot of land. The claim of Palestinians on Jerusalem is not because it is a nice city, but because it is *Al-Quds*, the Holy (city), a sacred space. And for the same reason Israelites are not satisfied with Tel Aviv (which is more modern and "comfortable"). Religion cannot be encapsulated in neat little boxes. This is the human condition. I repeat, the Ayodhya incident is not an exclusive concern of two communities or two religions. It is a symptom of both the scandal that religions give all over the world and the insufficiency of dealing with the religious dimension of Man with merely political measures. Northern Ireland, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Kashmir, Punjab . . . are neither exclusive political problems nor exclusively religious strifes.

But let us go back to Ayodhya and my Christic reflections. "The time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem" (Jn 4:21), which means the time is coming when people will approach the mystery of Reality neither in Ayodhya, Mount Meru, Mecca, Rome, Badrianath, Sarnath, nor—much less so, of course—on Wall Street or Capitol Hill, or in the Supermarket, the World Bank, or any Parliament. The time is ripe to discover that true worship is the recognition of our infinite dignity in ourselves, and, at the same time, our incapacity of doing it in isolation by closing selfishly ourselves within our contingent shells.

Or, quoting from the same source, true worship is "in spirit and in truth." "In spirit," that is, everywhere, in any sincere form, also in those sacred places indeed, but not exclusively, and perhaps—for many people—not even preferentially there. The Spirit is everywhere, blows where *she*² wills, when she decides so, and especially how she wishes, so that nobody can a priori exclude any blowing of the Spirit simply because one does not like it.

But also "in truth," which means not only in truthfulness, that is sincerely, but also with authenticity, that is in those forms, times, and places that are meaningful, revelatory, or full of grace for us. Truth is always relational. It implies a relation with us. Truth is always concrete. It is not purely objective, because we are involved in it. Nor is it purely subjective, because more than "us" is also involved in it. In sum, Ayodhya is a real religious issue.

I do not say that institutionalized religions should be abolished. All antireligious movements have indeed turned into other belief systems, churches, and ultimately, new religions. We should not, we cannot "throw away the baby with the bathwater."³ The baby is too big, religions are too ancient and powerful—and living. But I say that the time has come for a religious reflection inside and outside the religious communities, a time for asking ourselves two basic questions: (1) Is our record so clean that "we" (Hindus, Muslims, Christians, humanists, et al.) can be simply satisfied with condemning the others and carry on our "business as usual," just allowing some reforms? (2) Can we not find, within our respective traditions, enough elements for a radical transformation? (*Metanoia* would be the Christic word.)

² See Jn 3:8. Panikkar here refers to the Hebrew word *ruach*, which can be feminine. [Ed. note.]

³ A saying derived from a German proverb.

We cannot set back the clock of the temporal flow of reality. To rebuild a new mosque or a new temple, or both, on the same spot would mean that we come to a merely political and superficial compromise, and ask for more trouble. One day, in fact, two big congregations just being separated by a wall will meet, and some minor incident will trigger a new conflagration, as we have witnessed so many times. It is politically shortsighted to put them side by side and letting them feel that the respective "party" is the victorious one.

But there is a reason that is deeper than any political expediency or even prudence. The reason is that, if religions are living realities, they cannot be satisfied with looking at the past for inspiration for the future. They have to look at the present. The present also has revelatory character—to speak a religious language. And the present tells us, in unambiguous terms, that the situation has changed both as to religious consciousness and political awareness since all those established religions came into existence. A new step from all religious communities is required. Religions need an inner transformation.

I am not proposing to turn Ayodhya into a desert place, as a monument to religious intolerance. I am not proposing, either, to create a facile eclectic spot for a spiritual picnic of shallow spiritualities. I am proposing a Temple of Understanding, a Mosque of Reconciliation, a Church of Love, a *Gurdwara* of Peace, a *Gompa* of Compassion, a *Stūpa* of Reverence, a Forest of Joy, a Tree of Insight, a House of Fire, and especially a Hall for the Word: for the moment, a place where people may meet precisely to figure out what we should do, how we should live a more natural, human, and divine Life in spirit and in truth.

In the midst of Athens, when religions were proliferating in Greece as much as in India today, there was an altar erected "To the Unknown God."⁴ Could there not be in Ayodhya a shrine consecrated to the Unknowable Divinity?

⁴ Acts 17:23.



Part 12

LET'S STOP SPEAKING ABOUT "THE GLOBAL VILLAGE"*

Our use of language reveals how we see the world and uncovers our unconscious assumptions. Many people still go on speaking about the "Third World," for instance, because it is a handy phrase, without questioning the obnoxious idea that the gross national product, or at least the number of dollars per capita, should be made the decisive criterion for the evaluation of peoples. It is only for practical reasons, they say—and this is precisely the worst part of it: the primacy given to those "practical reasons."

Something similar, if not worse, happens with the optimistic, naïve, and ultimately technocratic description of the world as a "global village." Probably very few of those who use it have ever lived in a real village. What they actually mean is that the world is becoming a *megalopolis*, which is something very different, and they welcome this as a sign of progress. They mean that a system of communication now covers the planet—in the few major world languages, of course, and in order to convey economic, military, or so-called political information. You do not communicate love, or a joke, or anything which has no "global" interest. The "global village" means that "we"—the rich, the "experts," or even the "well-to-do" revolutionaries—can travel, or rather fly, from one continent to another, probably to or through a chain of hotels that are part of some great technological complex. The "global village" means that such technological complexes have now extended their tentacles over the whole surface of the planet, and that we should rejoice that "it pays"—for us, of course—for this allows trade, business and—magical modern word—"communication."

The idea of the "global village" fills the minds and even hearts of those who use the phrase with the good feeling that finally we have achieved something positive in our world. It is always an optimistic phrase. People unconsciously feel good about it. And here is where I detect unconscious colonialism. As we cannot have a global empire or a universal church, let us, at least, have a "global village," which will serve as a Trojan horse through which we can smuggle in the technology we want, the "science" we profess, and the system we advocate.

* In *Interculture* (Montreal) (1981).

Do we perhaps have in mind something like Los Angeles in California writ large? An immense area of land covered by houses and more houses, separated by highways, with significant air pollution, but also private swimming pools and all the gadgets of technological communication, where roads cover 70 percent of the land and people do not walk anymore, not only because the streets are not safe, but also because the "practical" unit is the thousand steps of the car—that is, the mile (*mille passus*)—and not the one step of leg.

The "global village" means, in fact, not a real village, but a megamachine, a global network depending on mechanical and intensive techniques, all of them artificial, controlled from a few privileged places. Those who like this speak of a "global perspective." That is a contradiction in terms. There is no perspective through 360 degrees. A real village does not pretend to have a "global perspective." It defends its own vision, colors, sounds, and smells. A village is a cluster of houses; it is a "vicinage," a word that comes from the Latin *vicus* and Sanskrit *veshtis*, meaning house, dwelling-place, or settlement for neighbors (*vecinos* still in Spanish).

A village is there to *live in*, as the wise Nagas in the northeast of India have done so effectively: the village has gates, and there they live, talk, and enjoy life. For work, they have created a town outside the village, frequented mainly by all those immigrants from other parts of India who come there for business—even if they call it "progress."

A village cannot be global. It is, on the contrary, a microcosm. Its life is interior and therefore it does not need to spread thinly around the globe. A village is not a ball (globe) on which to slide or to be thrown around. A village is stable and has roots. A village has its language, its customs, its rhythms. It has also, certainly, its villains, but Interpol is not needed to locate them. The whole village knows them: that landlord in the upper street, the publican at the crossroads, that beggar in the outskirts, and the hypocrite whom we do not need to mention. . . . Nothing is more differentiated than a village. Each person in it has a face, a name, even a nickname. Anonymity is impossible, for the villagers are not a mass. I am not glorifying the village. Riots in a village can be terrifying, and the burden of your past sins can be unforgivable. Yet you are free to wander away and start anew somewhere else.

The "global village" is not a village for the real villagers of the globe. Never before have there been so many "have-nots" in the world. If we were in a "global village," they would be visible to all. But they are hidden from the view of the defenders of the "global village." They are the under-pariahs, kept out of sight, hidden in three-quarters of the world in the so-called Third World, which, if it should be called anything, should be called the Two-Thirds World. The statistics are today common knowledge. Never have there been so many hungry people, so many displaced persons, so many war casualties, so many dictators and exploiters as now.

The constructors of the "global village" think they need one language for the "global village." But what we really need is a Pentecost where each can speak the proper dialect and be understood by the other. What we need is many villages, each of them conscious of being the center of its world, the hearth of its inhabitants; and, at the same time, containing paths along which pilgrims—not tourists—travel, keeping one village in communication with another. Technology is the world of means. What are our final ends?

SECTION III
SECULARITY AND PEACE



Part 1
CONCORDIA AND HARMONY*

* Original text: *Concordia e Armonia*, ed. M. Carrara (Milan: Mondadori, 2010).

INTRODUCTION

The title of this book, *Concord and Harmony*, represents the dream of humanity, a utopia, perhaps, although religions unanimously agree that the way to achieve it is through *prayer, peace, and love*.

These three words are closely related to each other. Without a life of prayer we cannot experience true peace, and without peace love does not flow spontaneously—in other words, it is not true love. There can be no such thing as true love on command. Love is not a *will to love*; love challenges the will, and this is one of the most deeply rooted "dogmas" of the West that is ingrained in all activities of modern life, from commercial to political and even the important field of education. This may be the reason why none of these three words can be found in today's teaching programs. Perhaps they cannot be taught in the context of the supremacy of willpower. "Der Wille ist das Ursein" (Will is primordial being), says Fichte—not to mention Nietzsche and other modern-day thinkers. In philosophical terms, this corresponds to the priority given to the final cause. It seems that everything we do must be done with a purpose in mind and in order to achieve some goal—and we are consequently depressed when we fail. Competitiveness, accomplishments, success, and so on are the modern slogans. This syndrome has become so deeply ingrained in the soul of modern civilization mainly because of three factors: *rationality, dialectical thought*, and the *ontologization of the legal system*. These three go hand in hand and influence each other. Everything is interrelated, as most religious traditions recognize. Without this intrinsic correlation (*pratitiya-samutpāda*, a Buddhist would say), praying for another could become mere superstition or magic. Why would the impulse of our spirit reach our neighbor? This universal interconnection is also the authentic Christian vision of the Body of Christ and the vision of the world as the Body of God, as many Indic traditions affirm. The ultimate reason for the "law" of *karma* consists in this. Modern analytical thought, which has a legitimate role in modern science, has nothing to do with this.

Love has no reason, as almost all mystical schools tell us. The Christian gospel, like other sacred traditions, willingly extends love to include enemies and claims that actions that are not prompted by direct and immediate compassion have no value—even if they are carried out for the love of Christ (Mt 25:37–40). We must remember also that the *Gītā* teaches us to perform our actions without looking at the result (*BG* II.47, etc.) and the *Mahābhārata* (V.12.3880, V.22.5571, etc.) urge us to do good to all, regardless of whether they love us or not.

Without a life of prayer all our speeches about peace and love, like all those about freedom, are only unrealistic and utopian thoughts.

In the silence of prayer we can hear the heartbeat of the universe and direct its dynamism in a nonviolent way toward a more peaceful state—since peace does not exclude either action or the hierarchical order that maintains the harmony of the world or, in the words of the *Gītā* (III.20 and III.25), the *lokasamgraha*.

I would like now to cite just nine of the *sūtras*:

1. Peace is participation in the harmony of the rhythm of Being.
2. It is difficult to live without external peace; it is impossible to live without inner peace. The relationship is a-dualistic (Advaitic).
3. Peace is not conquered for ourselves nor is it imposed on others. It is both received (discovered) and created. It is a gift (of the Spirit).
4. Victory obtained by violently defeating the enemy will never lead to peace.
5. Military disarmament requires cultural disarmament.
6. No culture, religion, or tradition can solve the problems of the world on its own.
7. Peace essentially belongs to the order of *mythos*, not of *logos*.
8. Religion is a path toward peace.
9. Only forgiveness, reconciliation, and constant dialogue bring peace and break the law of *karma*.

I shall not comment here on these *sūtras* since I have already done so in the book *Peace and Interculturality* (included in Volume VI, Part 1: *Pluralism and Interculturalism* of this *Opera Omnia*). I would sum up the essence of an authentic religion by defining it as a "path to peace." All this can be epitomized in love—though it is as easy to proclaim the exhortation to universal and unconditional love as it is difficult to put it into practice.

Love is the Golden Rule of all religions. After some sixty centuries of human history, as the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:3–12) tells us, loving one's neighbor as oneself, with all that it involves, requires no theoretical justification. Love remains the only empirical condition for the survival of humanity—a condition, however, that has not yet been put into practice, despite being the only possible alternative. This is the new challenge of our time, and one that involves every aspect of Man—spiritual, social, and cultural—as I attempt to discuss in depth in the chapters of this book.

The underlying theme of the book is *harmony* and *concord* as prerequisites for peace.

FORMS AND CRISES OF CONTEMPORARY SPIRITUALITY

In this chapter we analyze the various forms and crises of contemporary spirituality, taking into consideration all types of spirituality, from Buddhist to Christian, from Islamic to "contemporary" spirituality and modern-day atheism (if such may be defined as "spirituality").¹ The problem might be summed up by this question: is it possible for "modern" man to still have a religion? For the first time in the history of mankind, in fact, we find ourselves faced with a real "irreligious" culture (not to be confused with an antireligious attitude, unlike which it avoids taking any position whatsoever). And, while we do not intend to offer here either a philosophical or an apologetic study but simply a phenomenological description (without presuming, therefore, to supply the ultimate answer to the problem or to suggest what it *should* be, but merely attempting to give a general outline of contemporary religiosity), it is clear that, for the first time in history, it is not possible to give a distinctly positive answer to the above question.

"Modern" man does not appear to be a religious man; his spirituality tends to be exclusively *ethical*, and often in the imperative "do no evil" there lacks the ultimate basis of the concept of "evil." If religion is going through a crisis, therefore, it is obvious that modern man himself is also.

During the last postwar period the West has experienced an intensification in the tension between Christianity and the modern world, between the profound need for a spiritual life and the demands of a new world in which there no longer appears to be room for spirituality. In spite of extensive debates and studies on this subject (both in America and in Europe; in fact, a whole series of new magazines have made their appearance with the sole purpose of remedying this situation) we can see, just a short time later, that there has been no reaction comparable to that of the years following 1918—no positive reaction of reawakening, that is. Today the problems have been somewhat sedated. A certain *stiffness* has crept into both atheism (theoretical and practical) and the type of integralism that condemns and negates everything; at the same time, we have also given in to *compromise*. It is not possible, in fact, to tolerate extreme tension for a long time without eventually feeling the need to relieve it—as the Chinese proverb says, "You cannot stand for long on tiptoes." So it is with the situation today: the tension between spirituality and modern demands is not perceived with the same drama as in the past. It no longer rests on objective and philosophical theoretical bases, but has become a fact limited more than anything to the personal, private sphere of each individual.

The condition of modern man may be expressed in the verse by the Latin poet that says, *Nec cum te, nec sine te*. Contemporary man, in fact, can no longer do without modern life

¹ Chapter originally published in *Studi Cattolici* 6, no. 33 (Rome) (1962): 5–19.

and the collection of values constructed by civilization (science, technology, culture), yet, at the same time, he feels he cannot forgo a spiritual life, he cannot live (without ceasing to be a man) in the absence of certain ideals, certain suprahuman values, without faith, peace, love, inner life, enthusiasm—in short, without the transcendent and the absolute. This negative dilemma, moreover, is even found in spirituality itself. On one hand, in fact, modern man (for the simple reason that he is, after all, human) cannot live on science and culture alone, yet neither can he live without them; on the other hand, while he strongly resents modernity he realizes that he can no longer live in peace with the old, classic, customary, and traditional forms of spirituality (and religion) that have ceased to meet his needs despite the fact that today, as in the past, he cannot live without them. As we have said, therefore, the problem is *neither with you, nor without you*. This is the origin of the modern man's apprehension and fear, of the so-called French existentialism and the phenomena of restlessness and anticonformism that appear from one end of the globe to the other, from Sweden to Argentina. We would like to return to our roots, to nature, but all the conquests made in the fields of technology and thought can today no longer be ignored. Nature itself has lost its own innocence.

At this point the question arises once again as to whether modern man can exist and still have a religion—in other words, whether contemporary religious spirituality is possible. The problem cannot be taken lightly. As time passes and the world population increases, the percentage of Catholics, and Christians in general, is gradually falling; in 1910 the former represented 17 percent of the world population and dropped to 16 percent in 2000,² while the total percentage of Christians in the world has dropped slightly more in the last century, representing 32 percent in 2010 (down from 35 percent in 1910)³—and how many of these truly take their faith seriously? The great masses of Africa and Asia, which have a growth rate that is three times higher than those of Europe and North America, are also losing all forms of traditional spirituality. As we said earlier, we are faced today with an irreligious rather than antireligious culture (an antireligious culture, in a certain sense, would have been on the same plane as religion); the great mass of Western humanity, in fact, is not antireligious in the name of some other ideal, but appears simply as being without religion. This is why we cannot give any *a priori* answer to the above question; nor is it necessary, either logically or religiously (from a Christian point of view), for there to be a solution. This has, in fact, always been the case; we were simply not aware of it. Perhaps the law of great numbers, on which history is based, is different from that of our homespun arithmetic; perhaps faith is the discovery of an "onto-qualitative vision" of the world as opposed to a quantitative mirage.... All this transcends us, however, and exceeds the field of phenomenology.

It is perfectly conceivable that there is the need to choose between religion, a sense of the transcendent, God, and the *other world*, on one hand, and humanity, a sense of the imminent, Man, and *this world*, on the other. No one can serve two masters.

As modern thought and its scientific conquests advance, common man loses all forms of spirituality, without appearing to replace it with anything else.

Science and Faith

The three pillars on which this age rests are science, technology, and culture. Undoubtedly, science, the highest representative of the modern revolution, is not so much a doctrine, a discipline, as knowledge, a frame of mind, a form of reasoning that generates a different

² "The Global Catholic Population," Pew Research Center (February 13, 2013), www.pewforum.org.

³ Bruce Drake, "Number of Christians Rises, but Their Share of World Population Stays Stable," Pew Research Center (March 22, 2013), www.pewforum.org.

mentality than the classically philosophical type. Science is a *category*. The *substantive reasoning* of traditional philosophy is opaque to the *functional reasoning* of science; the aim and the viewpoint of these two mentalities are completely different. Philosophy seeks to discover the causes of things, their reason, their essence; its aim is to learn why a thing is what it is, to know what is matter, life, friendship, religion, faith, God, and so on. The functional reasoning of science, on the other hand, does not ask *what* things are, but *how they function*, what is their *purpose*; it strives to discover their dynamism, to anticipate.

God, faith, religion, and life itself are only of interest to science from a functional point of view. The verbs "to demonstrate" and "to know" have different meanings according to the point of view from which they are used. "To demonstrate," in substantive reasoning, means to find the *raison d'être*, to reach the heart of the thing studied (which is always another being), while in functional reasoning it means to show, to reveal, to explain. The verb "to know" implies knowledge in both points of view, but while in substantive reasoning it is the essence, the constitution of a thing that must be discovered, in functional reasoning what is important is its behavior, its use. In the Middle Ages it was not considered necessary to discover how man, the heart, or the brain function in order to learn what they are, just as in our modern age we no longer feel the need to ask ourselves what man is within a concise picture. To Galileo a falling body did not involve investigation into what the body and the fall are, or *why* the fall occurred, but merely *how*, *when*, and *to what extent*. Interest shifted, and by Descartes the question had already ceased to be what things, salvation, truth, and *are*. His way of putting the question was different: "What things can I be *certain of*? What is the criterion of truth? How can I attain knowledge of things?" In the order of science everything can be explained, developed, and shown, but nothing can be demonstrated, founded, created, or re-created.

Spirituality (any form of spirituality, not only Christian but also Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic, etc.), on the other hand, actually rests today on a different kind of *cosmology* and *anthropology* than the scientific kind. The world on which traditional spirituality is based is a closed, unknown world, in which the causes of certain effects do not appear clear to the human mind and, therefore, are made to derive from extrahuman forces. The modern human world, on the other hand, is "clear and distinct," scientific—it gives a logical explanation for all the phenomena it has managed to study. In the face of a storm, traditional religiosity lights a candle to St. Barbara, while science installs a lightning conductor; against disaster, poverty, and hunger the former mentality turns to the providence of God or men, while the latter seeks greater security through insurance or other technical means. The world itself is viewed by the traditional religious mentality as something unsafe, unknown, *numinous*, while science considers it as having finally become safe, tamed, *scientific*.

Spirituality has a different conception of man: the purpose of life is not *doing* but *being*. Then again, traditional spirituality is based on patterns that derive from certain *anthropological* conceptions that are common to all types of spirituality.

These patterns are not in themselves false, but they are ambivalent, and as the modern world causes the socio-anthropological concept to evolve, they appear insufficient.

Let us look at a few examples:

1. *God is the Master* and man is his slave, his tool, having no rights: man's only freedom is that of accepting his being and adapting himself to it, so he must cultivate *humility* as the basis of his life; man is a servant in a patriarchal regime, good but authoritarian and absolute. His task is to obey the commandments, and according to whether or not these laws are obeyed he is given as a reward or punishment the heritage he has been freely granted.

2. *God is the King* and man is his subject and must cultivate *obedience*; his relations with God, his ethics, are based on the principle *Do ut des* (I give so that you may give), and religious duties are on the same plane as human and civil duties, with the implied consequence that man receives protection from God in the same proportion as he is loyal to God; hence the conviction that good people must have good luck, and the relative disappointment when it proves not always to be the case.

3. *God is the Creator* and man is his creature, which means that God demands sacrifice to appease his judgment, his anger; *asceticism* is necessary in order to be worthy of Him. Ultimately, man is in the hands of the Creator—hence the need for amulets and talismans to obviate this sort of divine caprice, and the importance of external practices such as the pilgrimage to Mecca or a “quick prayer every day” made with a certain frequency, albeit without personal participation.

4. *God is the Father* and man is his child; the love born of this relationship is *sentimental*. We appeal to sweet Jesus, so good, with a love so blind as to allow himself to be taken advantage of; we have the same faith that the overindulged child has in his father's indulgence.

Ultimately, man “flirts” with God. The “devout man” appears as one who seeks in God an excuse, almost a justification, for his sins.

The Challenge of Science

Against these traditional patterns that are no longer able to satisfy, science is rising to the challenge. “God is with the strongest battalion,” and in a certain sense, we are in the opposite position to that of Elijah in the trial by fire against the 450 prophets of Baal; alone, Elijah won, while modern religious man has been defeated. The “secondary” causes are now quite visible and explain the working of the events: God, whose sole task appeared to be that of explaining the static and the unknown, has today become superfluous, useless, and *therefore* nonexistent. Today we are asking ourselves what is more useful: a procession to pray for rain or a dam or reforestation, the power of the water of Lourdes or an antibiotic. In Newton's day man still believed that the planets were moved by angels.

Faced with the advancement of science, religion seems to be regressing. Beneath this almost constant retreat there is an unjustified indiscrimination between faith and a given cosmological and anthropological conception—hence, when scientific demonstrations emphasize certain facts that do not agree with traditional cosmological beliefs, religion is discredited and expects to save itself through a strategic retreat, almost invariably too late. An example of this can be found in biblical interpretation, in which a certain indiscrimination existed between science and faith. In the Bible (according to the traditional mentality) there is everything man needs. Only one thing is needed, in fact: salvation, and the way to salvation is shown in the Bible. Subsequently, man began to feel the need to *know* other things, to have the science of good and evil, to know the *how* of things, and this *how* he also sought in the Bible. And here arose the conflict. If Joshua “stopped the sun,” then obviously the sun moved (around the earth); if Christ “rose up into the sky” it means that the sky is above the earth—but the Bible is not a book of astronomy! This need to divide these two doctrines dates as far back as the 1600s, and Galileo put forward the suggestion that the Bible seeks to show us not the workings of heaven, but how we may reach it. The genealogy of Adam, Abraham, David, and Jesus shows that humanity had lived for around seventy-five hundred years. “Darkness covered all the earth”—today all this no longer creates any difficulty, yet many problems still remain unsolved. The Bible, for example, speaks about Adam and Eve—therefore, one human species only. This shows how difficult it is to separate the message from the *form*.

It is understandable that such a regression on the part of religion is bound to leave many victims along the way; loss of faith usually happens to the best. Religion appears as the realm of the unknown, of superstition, and retreats like the darkness before the light. In Bultmann's attempt, demythologization is pushed to the point where faith itself disappears. This gives rise to the *dilemma* that the challenge of science makes inevitable: either *faith rests on a cosmological conception*, on human concepts, in which case it collapses when those concepts, that culture, and that vision of the world vanish, or *it rests on nothing* and so remains unutterable, mystical, and therefore inexpressible, unrooted, and equally destined to disappear for lack of incarnation. Faith is either based on a philosophy and so inherits all the weaknesses of that philosophy, or has no sound intellectual foundation and is therefore doomed to fade away in *praxis*—hence the great diffidence of organized churches and religions toward any operation of this type.

Can there be any way out of all this? Indeed, not only theologically but also phenomenologically there are indications of a possible escape. Faith itself is so rooted in man that when he loses one he immediately builds another; anthropologically (and therefore also biologically), it is not possible for man to live without believing in something. Religious faith is today sustained by "scientific" faith. Likewise, man cannot live without dogmas, and today concepts such as *democracy*, *freedom*, and *independence* have become absolutized. This process is more evident in countries that are just beginning to undergo scientific invasion, such as African countries, but also in Italy or in Spain. The people of these countries have a profound faith in the possibilities offered by doctors, medicine, and science in general, and this faith can be seen not only in the common people. They are all very confident that science will sooner or later be able to explain everything to us. Now the future demands hope, and hope demands faith.

The dilemma, therefore, is solved. Faith remains immanent to the weaknesses of the culture, philosophy, and science of a given period, but at the same time, it is still transcendent, still different, naked, independent, great in a supratemporal way; faith is still dynamic, and while it is able to express itself in a formula, it never identifies itself with a formula; it is above all knowledge. True religion is like the soul that lives only in the body, like the light that is visible only in things, like color that needs an object in order to exist. Faith needs to be incarnated. Faith needs an expression, and expression belongs to the cultural order, yet it can never identify itself with any expression, with any culture. The initial enthusiasm of the scientific age is rapidly fading. The transfer of faith from religion to science is no longer convincing.

The Contemporary Crisis

Faith in science is weak, and is beginning to crumble. There is already talk about the positive sense of atheism, of the "atheist faith." Faith is an irreducible microbe that resists even the most powerful antibiotics. As time goes on we come to realize that science does not make men happier, as we once thought. Science is revealing its limitations, and it no longer satisfies. Yet the crisis remains, because once the myth of science comes to an end, human spirituality finds itself uprooted and unable to find other ground in which it can take root and recover. The ancient credulity is no longer possible; all that remains is total (if temporary) skepticism.

In other words, modern man wants, or would like, to have faith, because without faith life is not possible, but the traditional object of his faith no longer satisfies, and science, taking its place as an object of faith, has shown itself for what it was—an idol. All we have left is skepticism, total, but traversed by an underlying trust that, sooner or later, it must be overcome. But how?

The simplest efforts toward this overcoming are made *from the outside*, because in taking just one step back, those who make them are defending the truths of religion, both by placing themselves on the same level as their rival and attacking their weak points, and by beating a strategic retreat—attempting, however, to save certain positions: “Perhaps the earth moves, but the sun doesn’t”; “Man may be over eight thousand years old, but he does not descend from apes”; “Adam and Eve might not be the primordial couple, but monogenesis is still valid.” Or else it is possible to react *from within*, by determining, on one hand, the limits of science, and on the other, the place of faith in an anthropological conception. But then we would have two spheres that are independent from each other (religion and science) and the consequent risk of double truth, liberalism, and divorce.

Both these positions are insufficient—the former underreacts; the latter overreacts. This, in a nutshell, is today’s crisis: *nec cum te nec sine te!*⁴ Yet we might perhaps discover a middle way. The form of spirituality that is possible today must be acquainted with science, but it must not idolize it—it must not be “scientific.” In order to survive it must not base itself either on the failure of science, thus seeking to discredit it, or on its triumph, which as we have seen, is incomplete. If science is to avoid becoming a surrogate of spirituality, spirituality must not presume to take its place. In this lies the greatness, but also the tragedy of our age—man hungers after a type of spirituality that is neither a super-science (which attempts to explain everything on the same level and represents pure groundless confidence) nor an antiscience, which would immediately be labeled as an antiquated relic of primitivism. It is at this stage of investigation that we find ourselves today.

Technology and Theology

The second great foundation on which civilization and the modern world rest is *technology*. While between faith and science (intended more as a mental category than as the sum of internal conclusions) the tension is manifest mainly in man’s personal dimension, between theology and technology the struggle takes place in the sociological gym of the contemporary world, the outside world, in the life of our civilization.

It is man who makes science, it is man who creates it; and this science then constructs itself a complete technology that, in turn (made of science, man’s creature), seems to finish up by “remaking” man himself. The imprint and the power of technology are so great that they have transformed man. Technology has reached such dimensions that it is no longer a creature of man, something that can be stopped. Man has realized that he cannot always control it; he has realized that technology rebels against its creator and is proving, in fact, to be the more powerful. It is now technology that conditions, that in a certain way “makes” and “remakes” man. The imprint that it leaves on him is far deeper than mere external conditioning; “technified” man, man who for two or three generations has been subject to its influence, no longer seems to have natural human reactions. This is another element of tension, therefore, between technology on one side and theology on the other, between the product of science and the product of faith. And the problem is precisely that of finding out whether it might be possible to achieve a certain synthesis between technology and theology, or whether it is necessary to postulate a total separation between these two forces that control the destiny (at least a large part of it and not only in the practical aspects of everyday life) of contemporary man.

Let us develop this argument by identifying three precise stages, which occur on the basis of dialectics that are specific to the subject itself: (1) the failure of theology in the present-day

⁴ “Neither with you nor without you.”

configuration of our technified world, (2) the victory of technology, and (3) the inevitable clash between technology and theology.

Theology, a Stranger in a Technological World

a. *Stranger.* The fact that theology is a *stranger* in the technological world and that it has been absent from the configuration of the modern world is an undeniable truth. We might almost speak even more categorically of the failure of theology to shape this entire type of civilization that came into being one or one-and-a-half centuries ago. This new world was born, grew, made its constructions, and had its successes and its failures while theology was absent, aloof, shut up in another world. Open any book on theological subjects and you will find a language, a mentality, an attitude, and problems that are different from those of technology. Between the two worlds reigns an incomprehension that is at times tragic—this is why the diagnosis of evil might in itself be the first step toward its overcoming. Theology feels out of its element in the field of technology; it feels it has nothing to say and nothing to do—it does not even speak the same language. In conversing with people who have received technological training, the use of scholastically theological language creates an enormous risk of incomprehension and misunderstanding. When, for example, a theologian speaks of "religion" (not in reference to the actual word only but to its deep sense), a person educated in the field of technology is very likely to understand it as "superstition." And if the theologian says "worship" (intended as the ontological act of becoming man and, precisely, the participation of man in the discovery of himself and the achieving of his purpose and the purpose of this whole world, by means of special dialectics—all things that the theologian studies), a person who does not know how to penetrate the more or less closed sphere of theology will understand it as "ceremony." When a good preacher says, for example, "You must go to Mass," he is clearly thinking about participation in the act by which the world is made and remade and transformed, because he knows well that Mass is the very act that transcends time and space, by which the world is created, re-created, and transformed, in the triple function of Christ the creator, redeemer, and transformer of all creation. In saying that we must go to Mass, therefore, he means that we must each take our own place in the real dynamism of the cosmos toward its fullness, but the person who has not been "introduced" to all this will only understand that we must physically attend a ceremony that may be more or less pleasant and more or less incomprehensible—and this is all. When a theologian speaks about "man" he refers to that microcosm that is moving toward God, but the technologist thinks of a human structure capable of carrying out a given function, reasoning up to a certain limit, solving up to five equations with five unknowns, and no more. And when a theologian talks about "good" he is clearly thinking about the fullness of being, but the technologist understand it as "effectiveness."

There is a constant misunderstanding between the languages of the two worlds. In addition to this, however, these two worlds also have different preoccupations. Traditional theology (and perhaps also philosophy, to a certain extent) strives to *explain* the world, while technology seeks to *transform* it; theology wants to discover reality in order to *contemplate* it, while the aim of technology is to *make* reality, so it does not ask itself "what is" this reality but "how is it made," in the conviction that what remains, what is real, is a *factum*. The great themes of traditional spirituality, like the leitmotifs of a symphony, basically remain the same, but the ways of dealing with them and their purposes are totally different.

b. *Absent.* Theology is absent even from the great problems of technology. In which theology book, for example, does it talk about the influence of the machine on man? It is

true that, for some time now, the subject of the "theology of earthly realities" is beginning to be discussed, but it is an almost completely new field, and indeed, it is not only a theology of work or a theology of civilization that is needed—we also need a theology of machinery, automatism, and production capable of establishing a dialogue with the entire planning effort of modern man. This inadequacy may be illustrated in a very recent example of a sociological nature. Of all the comments made on the luminous encyclical *Mater et Magistra* by Pope John XXIII, very few understood that the basic theme was the theology of development and underdevelopment; very few perceived the problem of human imbalance in the passage from a life that includes not only technico-economic but also spiritual, intellectual, and social categories to a life organized on a level that is economically and industrially different. These are eminently theological problems that are mentioned in the encyclical but that received almost no response in the comments of scholars. In which comment, for example, does it speak of the relation between happiness (understood as *real* peace and well-being) and the possession of material and economic development and well-being? Which of the commentators referred to the difficult "passage" we refer to above, clearly relating it to the ultimate purpose of man? Religion speaks of the fruit of the fields, of nature, but not of machines, not of all this marvelous technical world that is the fruit of the works and the hands of man; this is a world in which religion almost totally avoids being involved. And yet nothing is more theological than technology when it is considered as a manifestation of human creativity.

Technology and the Superman

What is technology, in fact, if not the human effort to transform and redeem the entire Cosmos and the whole man (and perhaps, the subsequent recognition of its failure and impotence)? The very *purpose* and *driving force* of technology is theological: to regain the lost paradise. For hundreds of thousands of years this has been man's dream. This quest for paradise lost is manifest in man's striving to become God. From when, according to the story in Genesis, the serpent tempted Adam and Eve ("you shall be as Gods"), up to modern man's incessant efforts to take the place of divinity, it has always been the same force spurring man on, the same constant desire springing from his innermost being—because he cannot live without wanting to become a "superman." The tower of Babel is the first example of the crisis of man striving to become God through technology. Scaling heaven is more than a fanciful geographic-spatial ambition, more than the conquest of unknown places—it is the dream of the superman symbolized by the conquest of space. The superman has been the constant ideal of all humanity, from the theology of St. Paul (according to whom man is reborn in Christ as a new creature, a superior and glorified being) to the entire Patristics (which with Clement of Alexandria formulated the theory of the superman), up to the modern process of the profanation of culture, which is itself based on the same dream of paradise lost, the same desire to "be as God." In this general trend we find the interpretations of a Nietzsche or a Darwin, which strive to demonstrate the improvement of man from a biological point of view.

It is not true that technology is the product of a desire for power. Its intention is to scale heaven and be as God, and it asserts and applies this intentionality. Perhaps what is diabolical about technology is that it does not recognize its own incapacity, the limits of its power; hence it rebels against the true superman, or, more precisely, against the true greatness of man, which does not consist in merely the conquest of external space but a more profound conquest that includes the very *overcoming* of space. Ultimately, technology seeks both God and the deification of man. We should not dwell too long on the results of technology, although they are such as to justify all optimism. It is true, certainly, that in the space of one

generation man's life expectancy has doubled, that mechanical work has replaced manual labor, and that for the first time in history the curse of the third chapter of Genesis has been overcome, allowing childbirth to be without pain and work to be without fatigue. It is true that only 150 years ago in the United States there were five million poor people and today there are 150 million rich people; that epidemics have been brought under control and diseases greatly reduced; and above all, that mankind, having eliminated distances, is for the first time aware of its oneness. All these achievements are not without importance and cannot be ignored. Theology must strive to face them and assimilate them, taking into consideration all these facts and taking care to avoid adopting the attitude of being above good and evil, as if the man of his time were not the subject and, in a certain sense, also the object of true theology.

Technology and Man

The victory of technology is clearly short-lived and fleeting, and its positive values, though they are real, are partial, imperfect, and incapable of reaching the depths of the human being. We can very quickly see the other side of the coin: in its own results technology must acknowledge a hard lesson of history after two world wars. It is true that diseases disappear but other new ones appear, and not only cancer and AIDS but also mental illnesses, which have increased and continue to increase at an amazing speed. In Europe alone the number of deaths caused by road accidents is much higher than those caused by any epidemic. Nature has been tamed, but stories of collapsing dams or firedamp explosions are not infrequent. The social system has undoubtedly progressed, but revolutions, political prisoners, torture, and barbarism are perhaps more common today than in the whole of history; and still today the common man, like the poor farmer in the India of bygone days, must labor, pay taxes, and be subject to the risk of losing everything. In an objective vision of history, we must recognize that today there are more wars than ever being fought. In ancient times, at least in winter a truce was possible—today fighting continues in all seasons, everywhere; nature no longer represents an obstacle. In fact, the forces of nature have been transformed into destructive weapons controlled by man, with the result that mankind is even less safe than when these forces were ruled by nature's "whims," so to speak. The very same astounding results of modern technology reveal an inner crisis; it seeks to transform man and, as we have said, is in part truly succeeding, but in spite of this, there is in man a *quid* that cannot be assimilated by or reduced to technology. True, pain has been overcome, but distress remains, and there is no technical way to make it disappear. True, life has been lengthened, but the meaning of existence has not been discovered—indeed, perhaps it has been lost. Poverty may be overcome, even worldwide, but between the conquering of poverty and the attaining of happiness there is not always a direct relationship. Diseases disappear, but death remains as a constant wake-up call, hinting, perhaps, that the meaning of life is something more than simply enjoying good health. Technology, therefore, is proving to be incapable of fully satisfying man—*technology is no more than the intermediary between men and their goal*. Today, modern man is realizing that for at least three centuries he has been in contact only with technology, only with the intermediary, and that, practically speaking, he is regarding things that should be used to help him move forward as an end in themselves.

There is, however, a *quid*, a human "invariant" that cannot be reduced to or assimilated by technology, which must be retrieved in order to begin a constructive dialogue in the present-day tension between the world of technology and this theological essence that is still found at the heart of both technology and the human being. Technology "massifies," standardizes

customs and habits, yet love remains, the hunger for happiness remains, and the personal face of each of us: our eyes, our intimacy, that human invariant that is the persona, the ego. The greatest fear of modern man is alienation, losing himself, being swallowed up by the masses, by machinery, by others. Yet man can no longer go back to the pretechnology stage in an attempt to "save himself"—he must cross this chasm and come through unscathed. This is the task of true modern spirituality—to save man not from technology but perhaps *through* it. In this struggle between man and machinery, true modern spirituality must find a form of asceticism that enables man to control the machine, to discover this *quid* that for a certain period of time technology and science have hidden—and this *quid* is man's own humanity, his *human state*. The great danger of technology, in fact, is precisely that of atrophying man who develops only some of his characteristics. *Man* has lived on the earth for hundreds of thousands of years, while "technological man" has only existed for 100 or 150 years, and, indeed, such a qualification cannot be attributed to more than a quarter of mankind today. This quarter, however, which considers itself as developed, civilized, and civilizer, is running the great risk of losing all sense of communion with mankind that lived 50,000 or so years ago.

We are losing touch with what the real, true, naked human being is, the man without qualities, the man of all times. Today, in order to "be," man is dependent on all this baggage of technology, culture, and science, without which he feels he is dissolving and disappearing. This is an alarming phenomenon: modern man is unable to be on his own, or even to "be," without a predicate that will attach itself to his being. How can a contact be established through the pure essence of man, between the man of all times (and also of today) and this so-called modern, civilized segment of mankind? There are people today who cannot even imagine how our grandparents lived without electricity, without cinema, trains, and cars, or how all the past generations spent their time. Technology has this terrible power of alienating man from man. It tends to make us into machines that are extremely developed but no longer in communication with humanity and, therefore, with the earth and the stars; we are increasingly becoming machines that speak, feel, and think, but have lost touch with *man* in his simplicity and nakedness, with the whole of mankind, and even with our neighbor. Never before has deep human communication been so difficult.

We must rediscover the sense of man, and in order to do so technology may be useful only if it is regarded as a phenomenon that serves to complete, and not to replace, the human being. This, then, is the task of modern spirituality—to rescue man in the violent, inevitable clash between a technological world (which represents the positive development of a part of man) and the whole existence of profound man. The modern-day crisis of skepticism is a crisis of disillusionment and a crisis of maturity. Innocence has been lost, and man must therefore be restored once again to wholeness through some method that will not fall into any extreme—whether naïve optimism or pessimism that negates all values that are not central. "Neither with you, nor without you"—neither with the type of spirituality received only formally from tradition, nor without spirituality; neither without technology, nor only with technology.

Culture and Religion

To comprehend the present-day situation we must follow a temporal process, based on history and the development of a large part of Western civilization, which will enable us to take stock of current positions and perhaps lay the foundations for something positive. It is a historical fact that religion was once everything in the life and culture of populations and civilization; religion had the last and also the first word and, up until a few centuries

ago, it represented the solution to everything also in Western civilizations. Everything depended on worship, the profane was "sin," and the foreign man was considered either a God to whom sacred hospitality was due or an enemy who brought and demanded war and death; there were no neutral values. The supremacy of religion, as man's only purpose, was, in fact, absolute: the tool of theology was philosophy, and this, in turn, controlled the sciences, which dictated the arts and, ultimately, technologies; all these were connected in a monolithic pyramidal system. It was the realm of *heteronomy*—the laws were dictated from above and everywhere the principle of authority ruled. We find an example of this in culture. In ancient Greece everything was connected—religion, theology, culture, and the arts; the individual sciences were but parts of philosophy, which in turn was a unitary theory of knowledge and life. The same occurred in the Christian Middle Ages, in which theocracy, empire, and monarch were all considered as positive values, and the same applied also to Islam and the "primitive" civilizations. Man was faced with a universal phenomenon, in fact, according to which the oneness of man must be sought in the oneness of life. The entire pursuit of oneness was a prioristically *heteronymous* and there was no room for an autonomous culture. Perhaps, in this sense, we could say that Socrates was the first modern man (although his victory has cost us twenty-five centuries), and was, in fact, accused of autonomy, that is, godlessness. The question was: what use is a culture that is bent on running its course? St. Bonaventure still believed that it all came down to one single belief: God loves man and has given him in the Bible everything he needs to find salvation, which is everything, the *one thing needed* (forgetting, however, that "everything" can be made up of equally important parts: the part of Mary and that of Martha); nothing else is necessary. The rest, in fact, is useless and therefore harmful.

Cultural Pluralism

The picture is complex; the heteronymous supremacy of religion leaves no room for cultural pluralism. As a reaction, in the West there has been a struggle to gain autonomy right from the start; culture strives to become a surrogate of religion and the peculiarity of the entire European history is a constant reaction to heteronomy in an attempt to gain autonomy. Hence the violent crisis of Christianity, which, however, is the only thing that enables it to face the present. Yet every reaction is ambivalent and carries within it a congenital drama; in this reaction the whole of Western history is a conquest of positive values, but with the corresponding negative effect of the breakup of unity.

The *positive* side of the reaction may be defined in one word: *independence*. Previously, religion had to intervene in everything, even matters such as what to eat and how to dress; theology imposed its directives both on philosophy and the high sciences. With Descartes philosophy broke away and proclaimed its independence, while Galileo sought to establish a science that was independent both from theology and philosophy; in politics, the English and French Revolutions caused the church serious problems, yet on the other hand, they succeeded in attaining rights that were hitherto ignored. Each sought its own independence. This attitude is today exacerbated to the extent that every branch of a science tends to break away from the science on which it previously depended (the psychology of philosophy, for example). In this sense, Thomas Aquinas is the father of the modern era, with his *distinctions* between sacred and profane, faith and reason, theology and philosophy, Church and State, supernatural and natural. This is the beginning; the evolution that follows will then have the task of bringing about the *separation*, and the breakup of unity will be an accomplished fact.

As we have said, however, this evolution has a *negative* side. True, the values appear fresher, but *unity* has been broken—and what takes its place is the disintegration of culture and man himself. While this unity is being broken it can still be lived (every revolution, in fact, lives off the same reality it is fighting against)—and unity is being broken especially in this contemporary age. Previously everything was hierarchized; even evil and sin had their place. All European history is a tragic defeat of unity, a constant retreat of religion. In the fourteenth century theology broke away from life and became nominalism. In the fifteenth century culture fell in love with the creations of men, things, and began to look to the earth, separating itself from God. The sixteenth century is characterized by the Reformation, in which culture detached itself from the Church and the essential unity was ruptured. In the seventeenth century culture broke away from theology, philosophy became independent, and with Descartes, unity of thought was destroyed. In the eighteenth century for the first time Christ was spoken against, deism and natural religion were established, Romanticism appeared, and science gained complete independence. In the nineteenth century atheism made its appearance, and culture took sides against God—this is the age of Nietzsche, Feuerbach, and Marx. In the twentieth century culture lost God and Christ and man lost himself (nihilism, atheist existentialism, and positivism). There is no longer anything to indicate to man the meaning of life, and he is doomed to be man, in all his freedom, without knowing why. Modern art follows the same path—an impassioned pursuit, but endless and meaningless. And over all this is raised the unpopular voice of the church, which is considered "antimodern" because it seeks to restore awareness of lost unity and constant values. Culture becomes a surrogate of religion though it nurtures no such ambition; it is man, in fact, who converts it into an absolute and, therefore, into religion. Today we are at the end of an era. We have reached the last stage of an evolution, of a culture; the movement is still under way, but the fading of so many ideas and so many values is already visible on the horizon, while at the same time we begin to see a collection of new, *auroral* values that are specific to our own era, and whose evolution depends on us.

The Present-Day Confrontation

We are faced today with the tragedy of religion in Europe, and the need that is being felt is of the purification of religion by religion itself. In this present-day confrontation between culture and religion, neither one has supremacy—religion must purify itself, because that which seeks to dominate must also serve; culture becomes an ontological tool, but it must not forget that it is an integral part and the earthly, ancient dimension of religion. All this process is not yet a historical fact, but it is already a reality of the present, as yet uncrystallized, still forming, and therefore still able to fail. True, the auroral values are already in sight, but the crepuscular powers are great and can still overwhelm them—our world may take one direction or another. Here the polarity becomes simply a possible ambivalence that depends mainly on our risk and our decision. An Arabic proverb describes this concept very clearly: "The world is God's, but he has placed it in the hands of the most courageous."

This struggle between the new world and the old world can be seen everywhere today, in Catholicism and Protestantism, in Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. This movement as a whole leads to a *purification of religion* to cleanse it of all adherences that are not of its true substance. Theology, philosophy, science, and also certain types of politics are expressions and manifestations of religion, but they cannot identify with it; their relationship, in fact, is always open and pluralistic. These adherences last for centuries, and many have become almost ossified; extirpating them is a delicate operation that risks removing also part of the

osseous substance. Any religious authority with a certain amount of responsibility, therefore, will understandably act with great caution. Yet from the perspective of the dynamics of history we discover a positive sense in this movement of discrimination that, if fixed at a point in its future, may be blameworthy. One example of political order can be found in the unity of Italy, which the *historical* Church initially opposed, but later came to acknowledge as a blessing. Another, more delicate example is that of Thomism regarding the problems of the modern-day mentality and, above all, in comparison with the doctrinal systems of other religions. On a general level we may speak of *felix culpa*, which makes it possible to reach an otherwise unattainable human maturity. There is a "cultural sin" in the West, almost a second original sin, in which all of the West's cultural offspring take part—yet it is being paid for by our world; through this process spirituality is purified. Religion can no longer live in a closed, homogeneous, small world; it must assert itself for what it truly is—universal and "catholic"—and it must discover what its mission is in the world.

This confrontation between culture and religion is ambivalent. On one hand, the humanistic culture, despite its antireligious and anti-Christian spirit, purified religion and served to uncover the true Christian sense (and this was its positive value); on the other hand, it sought to take the place of religion (and this was its negative aspect). After the first period of heteronomy, followed by the consequent reaction of autonomy, the term that characterizes the third and current stage is *ontonomy*, that is, the discovery of the organic and internally hierarchic structure of the *Kosmos* and man. This is the *nomos* of the *ontos*, the intrinsic and constitutive law of every entity, which is neither a whim of "atomized" independence on the part of each individual being (autonomy), nor the authoritarian totalitarianism of monolithic uniformity (heteronomy). Freedom, in fact, is not licentiousness, just as authority is not dictatorship. Each sphere has its own value, its own role, and its own development, which is neither the cancer of autonomy nor the anemia of heteronomy. While theonomy characterized the whole of the first era, and autonomous philosophy the second, a more mature theology is the mark of the third era, that in which we are living today. After the autocracy of theonomy and the tyranny of technology, we now have the sociological possibility of an ontonomous synthesis, in which each finally has its own place. Today, in fact, we are discovering that well-being of a purely material type generates ill-being and must, therefore, be *internally* subordinated to a higher value. We can see that absolute freedom leads to anarchy, that egoism ultimately leads to the death of the person, and that the total autonomy of reason leads to the annihilation of reason itself through skepticism; we can see that human beings are one and that if growth is to be harmonious it must be connected to a whole. In short, we are witnessing the rediscovery of unity as a harmonious and ontonomic integration of parts.

Is it possible, then, for modern-day man to possess spirituality? This is the question we asked at the beginning, but we immediately came up against the following dilemma: faith rests on a culture, on a certain conception of life, and so it is either too incarnate and imminent to the world (meaning that when this culture has run its course and disappears, faith will be left without support and crumble) or does not rest on any cultural value but remains detached from historical reality, and so it is ineffable, transcendent, mystical, and rootless (and, therefore, has no influence over the everyday life of men). The truth lies in neither and both of the two sides at the same time. Faith is not based on a culture, it is transcendent; however, it becomes incarnate in time and in civilization; it manifests itself in immanence, and when this civilization changes, crises inevitably result. Now, since all cultures are in perpetual movement (rising or falling), the destiny of every human and historical religion is to constantly overcome the constitutive crisis.

Toward Authentic Spirituality

For spirituality to be authentic, religion must be lived, but not in watertight compartments. It must imbue one's entire existence, it must be an acknowledgment of the transcendent sense of life while at the same time maintaining a hierarchy of values and the supremacy of the Spirit. Yet since science, technology, and culture began to exercise such a great influence on mankind, human spirituality has no longer been the same. Man has lost his innocence and cannot ignore the way he has come, nor act as if he is unaware that there are ulterior causes involved; God cannot simply withdraw to where science has not yet arrived, on the surviving margins of mystery, in an increasingly tight corner. The modern temptation, in fact, is to harvest the chaff with the good grain, and reject the lot.

Culture cannot replace religion, just as religion cannot disregard culture. The term "religious culture" is meaningful—it suggests that they have reached an agreement, but each must recognize thirteen diversities in the other and acknowledge that they are placed on different levels. Culture is not a *product* of religion, but it is certainly a *fruit*—a natural fruit that cannot be ripened artificially, just as a plant cannot be made to grow by pulling its leaves. In other words, culture is not an artificial product that can be programmed or created a prioristically for set purposes. On its part, religion needs a culture, as a type of semblance or garment. This is a garment of many colors, however, and a garment that must be continually changed and modernized to keep pace with history.

Again we find ourselves in the pure phenomenology of a modern-day spirituality whose characteristics may be summed up in the following three points:

1. *Positive spirituality.* Due to the effect of cultural imprinting, simple negative morality no longer corresponds to all the experiences and visions of modern man's reality (though this merely negative morality may seem convenient). Contemporary man does not want to be downhearted; he seeks an initiative, an active task; he wants to *know* and he is not afraid that knowledge might displace true faith. He wants to collaborate with the world, with others, with history, and with God himself; he is not a *worm*, but an important and irreplaceable *factor*, a true child of God. He does not want a sad morality and cannot bear a religion made of negative commandments; he cannot relate to an Old Testament mentality, with a God who prohibits simply because he is the Master. He is much more inspired by the one commandment of the New Covenant, which is eminently positive. Contemporary man seeks a task, a responsibility that is also freedom. The driving force that urges man to construct is *love*.

2. *Secular spirituality* is the fruit of the imprinting of science and technology, and has the capacity, at the same time, to overcome this imprinting. The world is not an enemy to flee from or despise, but should be considered as a fellow entity to overcome, or rather, to love and integrate, since it is also part of the final *Cosmos*. Man does not want to leave the world—he feels this would be cowardice, betrayal. He wants to save it and raise it up; he is on the side of the *Kosmos* and resists any type of spirituality that professes only to save his soul. Man wants to be man (as opposed to angel or beast), and since science and technology have given him the chance to conquer space, nature, *bios*, man cannot miss this chance. The world becomes part of man's being, and consequently this new form of spirituality is one of endeavor and collaboration in the redemption of the world. The basic problem is no longer that of being saved, or of saving only one's own soul, but of saving the world, the *Kosmos*, things, along with ourselves. Man is still sensitive to egoism, to spiritual egocentricity, but perhaps we can say that he has finally overcome it. Perhaps for the first time in history it is possible that man is now sociologically (individually he already was) fully man and, at the same time, fully religious; today the price of transcendent religion is no longer the contempt

of human values; today (and this is an effect of Western dialectics) no human values are abandoned, and ontonomous development can be achieved fully. Science and technology are tools of redemption and co-redemption, and the stimulus, the ideal of all this, is *hope*.

3. *Realistic spirituality* is the fruit of human experience, of its disillusionments, its realism that is no longer willing to let itself be blinded and is determined to prevent the positive values attained (culture, science, and technology) from diluting and annulling transcendence, the truly human (i.e., divine) core of man himself. Man wants to work, to build a better world, to have hope and love, yet all this does not fulfill the human *invariant*, man's pure essence, the inassimilable *quid*. Peace and happiness are not the fruit of something that comes from the outside; truth is a value that transcends us. Man may act as a man, but he knows that man is more than merely a thinking animal. The true (and often unrewarding) task of authentic spirituality is to prevent men from being blinded by success, by external results, by effortless, fleeting enthusiasm—true spirituality is realistic and, therefore, always serene, transcendent, eschatological. It propels man toward the future but is also very closely connected with the past, with history, with a type of eschatology that is not merely collective and historical but personal and interior, and always contains a traditional, conservative element. Our spirituality, if it is realistic, knows that man amounts to much more than what he has constructed and invested; it must discover that there is something deeper, something that goes by the classic name that is common to all languages: *faith*. Only faith can help us see beyond the present and, at the same time, connect the past and the future with the transcendent, with a more profound present. Faith is the only anchor and the only compass we have for discovering the deeper sense of our activity and our developing being.

A *positive, secular, realistic* spirituality under the impulse and the inspiration of *love*, *hope*, and *faith*—these are the three eternal elements of any form of spirituality. Man is older than the great discoveries of our time, and spirituality is more ancient than all crises. Man cannot live in the present with an outdated spirituality; but without a spiritual sense, without a transcendent religion, today he is a drowning man clutching onto culture, science, and technology as substitutes for religion, making them objects of faith, hope, and love, asking of them things that they cannot and will never be able to give, and turning them into idols that leave him dissatisfied. Thus the meaning of life is lost, yet what man seeks, ultimately, is salvation, which is not the work of culture but, rather, a *total human response* to a transcendent and constitutive call. Therefore: can today's man possess spirituality? Certainly. In fact, I would go so far as to say that it is necessary if he is to exist, to be man, especially now that he is emerging, purified, from the modern-day Western adventure. All spirituality of our age is based on these three elements: love, hope, and faith. This is the task that each of us must fulfill, not with words, but with works and with life itself.

ALTERNATIVES TO THE DOMINANT CULTURE

The title refers clearly to the modern culture that is of Western origin, though it has invaded a large part of the so-called developed or developing world.¹ (Western) modernity, therefore, opposes tradition (including that of the West). In my opinion, the question is not formulated correctly. The great danger lies in falling into the trap that is presented to us with the best of intentions and going against our own designs just because we have accepted uncritically the rules of the game that were dictated at the start.

I am reminded of the drunk who, arriving home at three in the morning, has lost his keys and is looking for them under a lamppost. A policeman asks him, "Are you sure you dropped them here?" "No," the drunk replies, "but there's light here."

Very often we look for the key where there is light, though it may not be there. And this is the task of the philosopher and the intellectual. The peculiarity (and strength) of a radical thought is not being afraid of one's weakness, or of the difficulty that this thought involves per se. Philosophy must be backed by a certain fundamental research, and we should not be daunted by the fact that this would mean avoiding immediate application, nor even consider the problem. We must have the courage to approach a situation radically, even though the solution is not immediately applicable.

I believe that the age of reforms is over, and that the dream of reforming the current system of collective life in any depth no longer exists. I realize that in a certain way this is terrible, but I am increasingly convinced that to do nothing but enforce a set of rules and reforms on the system will just prolong its agony. What is needed is a radical change, a profound *metanoia*, an authentic revolution.

I believe we are at the end of six thousand years of human experience, and to reduce Man's current problem to a series of judging criteria, whether they be Teilhardian (the perspective of hundreds of thousands of years is interesting, but it is not the problem we are dealing with here) or political (even though today politics is, in some way, the politics of the last century of our collective existence), is not an acknowledgment of the revolution that began in this world one or one and a half centuries ago. Our history books tell us that prehistory existed. Perhaps the time has come to discover our posthistory and realize that the "historical" period (the six thousand years of human existence with its somehow profound morasses) is coming to an end. I feel this is vital if we are to begin to establish some landmarks with a view to preserving as much as possible an open spirit and a free intellect so that we might comprehend this overall vision, not necessarily while adopting a new or alternative order.

¹ From the title of "Alternatives à la culture modern," by R. Panikkar, in *Interculture 77* (Montreal) (1982): 2-24.

Theory I:
There Is No Alternative

My first theory is that there is no alternative (in the singular). The alternative is not for the world or for Africa but for every single culture. We must abandon the dream that, from a phenomenological point of view, characterizes the colonialism of any period. The phenomenological nature of colonialism is a belief in the "monomorphism" of culture: monoform, uniform, and basically monistic: one king, one God, one church, one civilization, one system, one science, one technology, one economic world order—ultimately, a tower of Babel. Every attempt at global order leads to dictatorship.

Extra ecclesiam nulla salus might be the slogan of any imperialism: beyond Western civilization there is no salvation, beyond Marxist socialism there is no human future, beyond modern technology no possibility of survival, beyond modern economy no hope, and so on. It corresponds, ultimately, to the conviction of the Abrahamic peoples: outside my truth there is only error.

There is no alternative. The belief that we can build a new world order (despite all good intentions) is a vestige of intellectual colonialism. This is not to say that all those who believe in one God, one civilization, one empire, one science, one church, one religion, one technology, one economic system, and so on—all those who offer one single solution for the whole world—are people whose aim is to exploit others. They sincerely believe that this is the way to bring civilization, salvation, and happiness to the human race. After six thousand years of experience, from the pharaohs to our present day, perhaps we can begin to realize that this dream of a one world order has now become a nightmare that we have to dispel by waking up.

Corollary I

Consequently, there is no global culture, as this would not be culture. Today's well-known law stating that any quantitative change provokes a qualitative change should be enough to convince us of what Pericles claimed, i.e., that democracy is only possible if those who rule know all their subjects by name. Every true culture is always local and produced by Man's interaction with his earth and his Gods. True culture cannot be exported.

Corollary II

There is no such thing as a "global perspective." It is a contradiction in terms. Not even the angels (may I venture to say), not even God, as the Talmud tells us, have a global perspective.

There is, however, a deeper problem, which I might sum up by saying that here we have a great polarity. Wisdom, in my opinion, consists in transforming dialectic tensions or contradictions into creative polarities. As in the polarity between myth and *logos*, Nothingness can be completely reduced to *logos*: intelligibility, speech, rationality, comprehensibility, order, and perspective. Reality cannot be reduced to *logos*, nor, therefore, have a global perspective. Or, more simply still: a 360-degree perspective is not a perspective. Even if we have seen the other side of the moon, we can never see both sides at the same time. A 360-degree perspective is not a perspective.

Corollary III

There is no such thing, nor ever can be, as a universal religion. This is a very significant phenomenon, from the point of view also of Christian theology, as the evolution of the word "catholic" demonstrates. Up until the seventeenth century, "catholic" was interpreted as "universal" in a geographic sense. After this period, which marked the expansion of Europe,

such an interpretation was unthinkable. St. Augustine, nevertheless, translates "catholic" literally, from the Greek *kath'olon*, as *secundum totum*, or "perfect," "complete," and not in the sense of geographic universality.

I am not referring here only to Christianity but to every religion. A universal religion would not be religion; it would not be the collection of rites, symbols, and beliefs that gives ultimate meaning to the life of Man, unless it were to reduce the entire human species to one single philosophy, one single *forma mentis*, one symbolic system, one homogeneous culture, and one univocal cosmology. It is one thing to refer to religion as a constitutive dimension of Man, but quite another to speak about it as a socially crystallized solution that Man believes is the answer to his fundamental questions. The answers cannot be all the same because the questions themselves are different.

This does not mean there cannot be a more profound unity, such as that of mystical intuition. Even in the mystic experience, however, there is the *experience*, the *memory* of the experience, the *interpretation*, and the *reflection* on this interpretation of the experience. These four elements all belong to the reality of experience, and we cannot therefore talk of "naked" experience. Mysticism is, in any case, greater than religion.

Corollary IV

There is no universal language. Languages have always been spoken and are forged in dialogue between humans. We cannot dialogue with everyone. Even if the mass media succeeded in indoctrinating us we would still not be able to explain the living meaning of language. A language that is not *also* my own creation is not my language; it is not a human language but a mere code for giving orders—in the guise of information. Perhaps one of the last bastions of the colonialist mentality is that of believing in the great languages of mankind, whereas real language is invariably dialogical and, consequently, dialectical. What we call academic French, for example, is nothing but a dialect. If you go to Provence, Brittany, or Quebec you will see that each region has its own living language. The idea that in, through, and with one single language it is possible to communicate and live the human experience to the full is absurd.

Corollary V

There is no such thing as an ideal or perfect order, or politics, or economy, or humanity, from the point of view of concept and intelligibility. I believe this ideal order should be debunked in virtue also of the principle of noncontradiction. This order basically appears to aspire to rigid monotheism and absolute truth. Leibniz's great optimistic idea of the best of all possible worlds has as yet not exceeded Platonism. What lies at the heart of our modern-day malaise is the global economic advance. We believe in a paradigm of reality that is more real than reality itself, yet true reality does not allow itself to be reduced to a set of paradigms or ideas. Praxis is not merely theory in action. There is something in reality that cannot be reduced to philosophy.

It is not easy, especially in the West, to make it clear that for philosophy to work it does not necessarily have to refer to the (ideal) world of ideas. Certain points of reference are needed, of course, but these are found within our own experience and not in the projection of an ideal order, a Platonic order, or one consisting of pure ideas. The key point of pragmatism is precisely this rejection of Platonism. Truth is applied not only to pure theory but also to praxis, though without absolutizing it. We cannot talk about the best human order, but only a system that in certain circumstances may be better than others.

**Theory II:
The Modern Culture Is Not the Solution**

My second theory is of a descriptive nature and serves to bring us to the third theory. It regards my idea of modern culture. The three aspects that might sum it up are: it is technological, pan-economic, and American in style.

Before beginning my description I would like to make a clarification. It would not be right to regard modernity from an exclusively negative point of view. I definitely do not wish for a return to the past or to encourage a romantic view of the past. The surpassing of modernity (*Theory III*) is itself a part of modernity, but lies beyond it. The criticism of modernity represents a sort of postmodernity and is itself a legacy of the modern world. Moreover, *science, freedom, and tolerance* are also modern values, and we might add more to the list.

If I dwell on these negative aspects it is in virtue of the following considerations.

My perspective is that of traditional cultures, which in all corners of the world feel threatened and invaded (though also at times liberated) by modernity. From this point of view we tend to see mainly the destructive aspects of modern culture and disregard those that are positive.

At the heart of modern Western culture the positive and negative aspects are strained to the point of conflict. It would be unfair of us to ignore the Western effort (which is often greater than that of all the others) to create a more just world and a different order. While in other parts there is still a belief in the messiahs of a certain type of Western world, today the West is generally free of such fleeting hope. Perhaps this is why the negative aspects of the Western culture seem to have the upper hand over the positive—the arms race, the impoverishing of populations, the loss of a sense of life and often of joy, and so on.

Criticisms of the modern culture are built on presuppositions that are part of the culture itself and, therefore, are forced to limit themselves to drafting reforms in an attempt to correct abuses and mitigate flaws. The demand is legitimate and important, but apparently insufficient from an intercultural angle. From this latter point of view, in fact, it is not a question of criticizing a system but of opposing its triumphant or devastating march into the four corners of the earth.

All this leads me to think that a unilateral description of the modern culture and the human spirit justifies the following analyses, or rather, the summary presentation we make of them.

A Technological Civilization

I would like to use the word "technocracy" but I realize it is very risky to do so, so I will speak about technological civilization. Technology, however (though I am not saying anything new here), is not only applied science; experts all agree on this. We know, in fact, that technology contains other factors besides that of science.

What I would like to emphasize, moreover, is not just that science is neutral but also that it is not universal. It is no coincidence that modern science (one of the elements of technology) was born within a certain culture and at a precise moment in history. The modern Western world has accepted nominalism as and for what it is. Modern science is founded on it. Now, most other cultures do not believe that words are merely labels. It is a mistake to regard the modern concepts of matter, energy, time, longitude, and space as concepts that are accepted all over the world. Neither the Native American culture nor the African culture nor the Oriental Chinese culture accept these concepts. Everyone can come to understand them, of course—by going to school, for example. But this is not what I am referring to. I am referring to the connaturality between Western (especially Anglo-Saxon) Man and technology, which, from a sociological

point of view, enables him to feel at home in a technologized world. Though the Indians of India are the best machine operators in the world, they will never be creative enough to design, for example, a new type of carburetor. Indian factory owners would never have had to close down their factories as the Germans once did, because the workers used to arrive at work before their shift began. Work, as the Neapolitans say, is *fatica*. This is also the sense of the Spanish word *trabajo* and the French *travail*, which derive from the Latin *tripalium*, an instrument of torture. I do not intend to describe here how the modern world is a slave to work and regarded as a feverishly laboring anthill. The technological civilization consists in giving (second-rate) machines supremacy over human life. We create machines that will control us. Not only is this culture not universal, it is not universalizable or even desirable.

The consequences are quite clear: though technologization may appear to be useful (we are told that electronics has made working in big factories more human), it offers us no alternative whatsoever. In fact, it means creating in the world a monolithic society and, in the end, chaos—a worse disaster than that of the present: technological totalitarianism.

It is not, I repeat, a question of defending utopia, of turning back history, much less time; yet I am not convinced by the argument of technological homeostasis. We are told, of course, that although today technology is producing hunger, exploiting unindustrialized cultures, and causing innumerable victims everywhere, once it is perfected it will find its ecological balance. It seems we are willing to sacrifice whole generations in the inevitable intermediate stages before the humanization of technology is achieved. And I find it doubly disheartening when this type of reasoning is sustained by those who, at the same time, are striving to defend the human life of unborn children.

It is not only the moral question that we might set against this phenomenon, but also the existence of other cultures that refuse to adopt such a conception of Man and reality.

The Pan-Economic Ideology

The Western lifestyle is that mentality that claims to be satisfied with the technological civilization and pan-economic ideology. From a practical point of view, this lifestyle agrees that there are undoubtedly things that must be corrected, changed, and improved, but from a theoretical point of view this civilization is considered to have the potential to give man happiness, peace, and everything his heart desires. According to some people, if the economic system is going well and technology is functioning, with all the appropriate elements of flexibility (it is not, after all, a question of imposing a totalitarian system), then everything is fine. If our stomach is full, then all is well; if all our needs are met and technology and the economic and monetary system are working, then we are content. The fact that Man also has other needs is not overlooked; he is, in fact, given the means to satisfy them. Man, according to the underlying anthropology, is simply a collection of needs. If we give him the elements to satisfy these needs, Man is happy. . . .

I believe that this modern culture with its three characteristics is not universal, and what's more, it will eventually destroy itself.

Corollary I

Modern culture is not universal. It does not respond to a desire of human nature; it is the result of a very limited human nature. Only Westerners and those who have been colonized by their thought possess the necessary connaturality to feel comfortable with it. This culture is the last bastion of colonialism. It undoubtedly holds within it a certain tendency toward universality, and in this lies both its greatness and its weakness.

Corollary II

Modern culture is not universalizable. It is in direct contradiction with the archetypes of other traditions and, therefore, cannot enter into contact with individuals of other cultures without destroying their basic identity.

We often deride the primitivism of the populations of Africa and Asia, which go to work in the new factories and, as soon as they receive their first wages, disappear, returning only when their money runs short. Even if they are offered higher pay, they will refuse to work more. We do not realize that with the introduction of industry a whole world collapsed, and that these people will never again enjoy the freedom and satisfaction they had when they did not have so many needs.

For example, the categories of time, space, matter, power and others—on which modern science, industry, and technology are founded—are in every way different from the categories we encounter in the classic Indic conception. Until recently, the accepted approach was that modernity did away with ancient myths and superstitions and that, consequently, we were bringing civilization. Today, however, after reevaluating these cultures, we no longer dare say this too loudly, yet we still insist on the pragmatic fact that only with modern concepts can we have a strong industry and a sound economy. The universalization of modern culture is an anticultural fact and an attack against other cultures. A few centuries ago populations were conquered by seizing their lands. Today the same is achieved by starting an industry.

Corollary III

Modern culture carries within it the seed of its own destruction. Its drive toward the infinite, to cross all boundaries and exceed all limits—its thirst for the absolute, which urges it to become universal and therefore causes it to grow excessively, constantly pushing it further—reduces it to a self-destructive cancer. St. Augustine's tearful comment, written when Rome fell into the hands of Alaric, "Roma non perit, si romani non percant" (Rome will not perish as long as the Romans do not perish) does not apply here. And, in fact, here we are not dealing with the fact that the moral values of the people of the modern culture are inferior to those of other cultures. It is not about the degeneration of individuals. It is about the very nature of the system which, having reached its limits, has no way of stopping without destroying itself. The very dynamism of its insatiable growth will kill modern culture. Man's thirst for the infinite aims at a desire for universality, a desire that invades the entire domain of *humanum*. Thus we reach the limits of the earth and Man. What is limited cannot bear an infinite impulse. Any claim of absolute erupts almost violently in the sphere of the relative.

Let me make this clear. The fall of the Roman Empire or the Spanish Empire, for example, may be explained through internal corruption and external pressure. Likewise, we could consider the decline of Russia or North America as being due to one of these two causes. Now, we are not talking about the victory of Russia or the United Nations, which are both just variations of the modern culture, but the subjective and objective collapse of this culture—subjective because the human subject drowns in a technocratized world; objective because the world depletes its resources through a culture that is unfamiliar with true recycling and lives by the acceleration that has now reached the farthest ends of the earth.

You might say that other cultures also have a thirst for the infinite and a desire for the absolute. This is true, but such cultures do not feel limited on the planet, so to speak. They are not limited by the two dimensions of time and space (that is, ultimately, in history) and therefore there has always been a third, thematically infinite element (a

loophole, we might call it) that has allowed them unlimited expansion. Even if we give room to religion, it has become reduced to a private matter (for consoling, rightly or wrongly, the individual). Modern culture has no room for the cosmotheandric (*theanthropocosmic*) vision of reality.

Theory III: There Are (Only) Temporary Alternatives

In short: can we find anything more convincing that corresponds to what we might define as a new modernity? Whenever I am criticized for nurturing utopic ideas, I reply that if we were to discover that eating three times a day causes cancer, would we not be willing to cut down on the number of meals we eat? It all depends on our conviction, which, in turn, depends on how much we identify with what is happening, to the extent that if I am threatened by cancer I will be willing to give up eating three meals a day. Other people's difficulties do not affect me personally, and so, by abstraction, I call it utopia. Humankind that does not eat three times a day we refer to as the "Third World." We are all familiar with the reactions of democracies to those who advocate austerity, simplicity, and reduction. What, then, can we say about this modernity? I would like to offer a few reflections.

There Is No Model

There is no paradigm, and consequently no precise a priori advice can be given. I have nothing to suggest, except, perhaps, to try and identify a space in which creativity might be able to develop solutions, however partial, relative, modest, and imperfect. This attempt to create a space in which the little things may grow by themselves is made along the entire scale of human life, and everyone, therefore, can contribute.

Let us go back again to the role of myth and love, the role of praxis, which cannot be reduced to *logos* or theory, to this thing for which we barely have a language. If I speak of love, of fellow-feeling, someone is bound to say, "Here we are again with this same old talk about loving one another when, in actual fact, we practically kill each other with this same love." Knowing full well, however, that there is no model and, consequently, no formula or solution that can be supplied, we might still attempt to create (and I believe the word is well chosen) a space where a flower can grow and children can play. Many of us may feel the temptation to want to become prominent historical figures and so we become discouraged—thereby justifying our idleness. No, it is not a question of being a great man or woman, but a great human being. The desire to be great is already being a part of a competitive society. Most of the movements for peace, ecology, nonviolence, personal growth, new spiritualities, voluntary work, and so on move in the right direction (despite their differences) as long as they do not develop into new ideologies.

The Role of Myth

We are undoubtedly, to a certain extent, the masters of *logos*, simply because we know the laws. Myth, on the other hand, eludes us. Myth will not be manipulated; either we believe in it or we do not. Moreover, as soon as we realize that we believe in myth, we cease to believe, because myth is something we believe in without realizing. This, in fact, is what makes it myth. Myths die like cultures and humans. Myth changes just by speaking about it.

A new modernity should leave room for myths to develop. This is why cosmic trust is necessary. Those ruled by *logos* cannot have this trust because their reason must be in control and on guard at all times to keep them from being deceived. Blessed are the poor in spirit!

Secularity

Here we touch on a problem that is very real and very vast. In our modern-day situation we may discover an aspect that I have not yet mentioned but that I consider to be vital to this study on the different possibilities for a full life. Perhaps the transhistorical period of human consciousness has begun. To define this, I use the polysemic word "secularity." This secularity can be found in Africa and even in the West that I have described.

This word, which is not to be confused with either secularization or secularism (indeed, secularity can be as sacred as anything else), expresses a conviction that I believe can be found, to a certain extent, everywhere. This is the conviction that the *saeculum*, that sort of troika made up of time, space, and matter (in Sanskrit *āyus*, in Greek *aión*), which traditional religions have deemed illusory or fleeting, represents a final value that we must integrate. This might be the great challenge of traditional religions—to find the space of secularity in the sense that time, space, and matter are final values that we cannot neglect in our pursuit for complete humanity. And this can be expressed using Hindu, Christian, or other terms. The new modernity is secular. Temporal order is not only important and crucial in attaining eternal life, the heaven, brahman, nirvāṇa, final salvation, future justice—or however else we choose to call it—of our earthly existence. It is, in itself, essential and constitutive of reality and, consequently, of the ultimate and final order of the world. The *construction* of the earthly city is the *civitas Dei*. Christians can well understand what thirty years ago I called the "mysticism of incarnation," as opposed to those of transcendence and immanence. Hindus may interpret it as *ātman-brāhmaṇ* and Buddhists as *samsāra-nirvāṇa* and *nirvāṇa-samsāra*, not to mention other points of reference and other traditions.

Pluralism and "Centralization"

I introduce this controversy with the greatest reverence and respect. Dom Helder Câmara, one of the great men I admire, speaks of the populations of Latin America as being peripheral to the West. From his point of view he is absolutely right; these are marginal populations. From my point of view, however, and that of the alternative to modern culture, I cannot agree. It would, in fact, be catastrophic if we were to apply this idea outside of its actual problematic context and the Latin American cultural environment. If, for example, the Hindus in Varanasi no longer believed they were at the center of the world and the Westerners were peripheral, it would be tragic. The idea that some are peripheral is the acknowledgment that there is a *center*.

If we accept the rules of the game, if we believe that the center is in New Delhi, New York, or Paris, then we are decentralized, alienated, and lost. In past ages the center was the altar, the temple, God. Today we have to find the center within ourselves.

"Centralization" is always a goal, whether personal, ascetic, economic, political, or mystic. It is a problem of concentration, the problem of finding the four centers of reality, what I call the "quaternitas," the "*jīva-aham ātman-brāhmaṇ*." This, however, is another subject.

We might add an aside here to point out that true spirituality or religious faith has the role of reminding us that we are at the center of the world. Life has meaning if I am, to a certain extent, Everything, God, Child of God, Unique, Brahman, born of the Great Spirit, the microcosm, beloved of the Gods, something necessary, useful, and special in the construction of the city, something worth living for. What I am reflects the whole of reality.

The difficulty for a certain type of mentality lies in not being able to imagine that the human being is personal and, therefore, pure relationship, meaning that in "me" converge all the threads of intersubjectivity and also objectivity. Mystical body of Christ, *buddhakaya*, *ātman*, *Brahman*, and so on are just a few of the many traditional symbols that express this

intuition. The meaning of life, therefore, is not to climb to the top of the human pyramid in a mortal struggle against my neighbor (competition), but to find my own concentric center among all the other centers of the universe, and in so doing, to help support the world (as expressed in the *lokasamgraha* concept of the *Bhagavad-gītā*).

Lastly, pluralism is another characteristic of this new modernity. Pluralism is not the awareness of plurality, or a super-system that embraces the most extreme diversity, but a *sui generis* equivalent of the various cosmovisions. Today we are conscious of the fact that each of us is a center of intelligibility and that, consequently, we cannot reduce human richness to a common denominator. This implies that our ideas may be incompatible without them being necessarily and absolutely false. Myth is the realm of pluralism; its effect is tolerance, its condition is "centralization," its philosophic foundation is the pluralistic nature of truth itself, and its theological expression is the a-dualism between *logos* and spirit.

To conclude I would like to tell a little story.

Two Japanese Christians are walking in the imperial gardens of Kyoto when they see the emperor and Jesus coming toward them. Extremely perplexed, they wonder, "To which one must we bow first?" (an extremely serious question to the Japanese!). Finally, the wiser of the two says, "We should bow to the emperor first; Jesus will understand!" Yet what if they were two Shinto monks? I have no doubt they would bow first to Jesus, thinking that the emperor would understand. And two Japanese scientists would see the problem as purely objective, and the only solution would be to commit *harakiri*!

All this to say that today only mystics can survive, and then only by breaking the rules—in all good conscience.

RELIGIONS AND THE CULTURE OF PEACE

For the sake of clarity, I shall describe the meaning I ascribe to the two keywords of this chapter.

Religion. This word encompasses, in my opinion, a threefold aspect: *religiousness*, or the human dimension concerning ultimacy; *religiosity*, or the social institution (not necessarily an organization) in which the religious dimension of human life is embodied; *religionism*, or the more or less closed system of ultimate beliefs appertaining to one particular collectivity. The three aspects should be distinguished but they are not separable. For our purposes I use the word "religion" mainly as connoting an "organized re-linking with the sacred," but without forgetting that religion is transcendental to any of its expressions.

Peace. By peace I understand neither the mere absence of war nor solely the inner contentment of the individual. I take it to mean "the human participation in the harmony of the rhythm of reality." "Peace is in the inner harmony which dwells in truth," wrote R. Tagore in 1924.¹ For our purposes I use the word as connoting an a-dualistic relationship between political harmony among nations and personal fulfillment of the individual.

After an overall look at the past, in order to gain some perspective, I describe the present as an *intermezzo* to prepare the ground for the third and main part.

The Lesson from the Past

Taking into account the historical experience of humanity in its last six thousand years, I may venture a bold statement: the religions of the world have kairologically (not chronologically) passed through three periods:

Monism. Religion is undifferentiated from the rest of human activities and inseparable from human identity. If I belong to tribe *x* or nation *y*, my religion will be *x* or *y*. Wars and conflicts carry a religious element and often a justification. To live humanly is a religious act.

Dualism. The second period begins by disentangling religion from the rest of human life. Religion is simply one element in life, and the most important ingredient of religion may be the intellectual one. Religion becomes identified with doctrine.

Nihilism. If the first period proved unsatisfactory, the second one, at the present stage of our consciousness, proves equally unconvincing to an increasing number of people who keep religion, if at all, as a private comfort or an irrelevant and harmless tradition. The nihilist response is to discard it all and simply deny the religious dimension of human being.

My hypothesis is that the three attitudes do justice neither to human nature nor to the very nature of religion.

¹ See R. Tagore, *Lectures and Addresses* (1924; Delhi: Macmillan, 1980), 17.

Interlude

In the turmoil of the present day we find also a threefold reaction.

Fundamentalism. We should regain the original insights of religion and fight the loss of tradition, of the sacred, and ultimately of humanness. We should have the courage to confess the truth without compromise. Revelation, God, or Justice is on our side.

Reductionism. Religion should have learned by now to be humble, recognizing that it has to be just a private affair and not be mixed up in human affairs for the guidance of which we have our reason and our moral sense.

Rejection. Religion has to be dropped as a superfluous remnant of the past, and eventually fought against when it flares up in dangerous revivals.

I submit that these three attitudes represent the three modern temptations, but that they do justice neither to the true nature of religion nor to the human condition.

The Present Task

Three facts seem to be undeniable. First, wars are on the increase in the modern world. The increase is in the numbers of wars, in the number of combatants (we have an army of around thirty million soldiers), and in the number of victims (some twenty-five hundred daily deaths since the Second World War, of which over 60 percent are civilians). The numbers, since 1991, increase day by day. This situation is already an indictment of the present civilization and should concern all of us.

Second, the very nature of war has undergone a mutation prepared over a century ago and consummated in the Second World War. War consists no longer in battles between armies, but in destruction of peoples, human habitats, and earthly grounds. It is no longer a horrible, but yet a ritual act. It is simply destruction.

Finally, religions have contributed precious little to the keeping of peace. Religions have promoted strife and division among peoples and individuals—notwithstanding many other positive services of religions.

How can religions contribute to the culture of peace? I would like to answer this momentous question with one single word, which I borrow from one particular tradition but that has equivalents in other religions and could be applied to all of them: *metanoia*.

Two general comments should precede my triple interpretation of *metanoia*. They encompass the three meanings and refer to the atmosphere in which *metanoia* (transformation) is meaningful.

The traditional word for my first comment is *humility*.

The contribution of religions to peace would defeat its purpose if we were to imagine that human peace, and even religious peace, entails the victory of one religion (obviously our religion) over others, or the victory of a diffused form of religiosity. Victory never leads to peace. And this is simply an empirical statement confirmed by human history. No crusade of the God-fearing people against the force of evil has ever brought peace to the human race.

The corollary of this is that mere condescension, merely strategic tolerance will not do. We need something more. We need conversion: *metanoia*.

My second comment is that *metanoia* is not a sadistic or a masochistic accusation against religion or religious people. A common indictment against religions amounts to saying that they have failed. We often hear that they have not succeeded in delivering the goods.

Those who argue that religions have not brought remedy to the ills of the world are assuming that religions should have been a panacea for humanity. To be sure, religious

doctrines have often seemed to make this claim. And certainly a doctrine that is impotent to yield results not only proves itself inefficient but also shows that something is missing in that doctrine—unless we devitalize and reduce them to irrelevant notions spinning in the air, accepting a total divorce between theory and practice, and thus reducing theory to an exercise in futility when not in alienation.

Yes, religions have failed. If you follow the *dharma*, if you love Christ, obey Mohammed, or the Torah, listen to the *daimón*, or the Spirits of your conscience, the earth will be a paradise. But what is that *if*? Why does hardly anybody take seriously that *if*? This leads me to a main thesis of my argument: *the need for a thorough transformation of religions* for the incoming millennium. This transformation is what I call *metanoia*.

After six thousand years of such failures we are no longer convinced by the two standard answers: one existential, the other essential.

The *existential answer* consists in accepting the failures of the past while recognizing the mirage of the future. It points to a new sect, a new religion, a new prophet. Now the Christians are going to overcome the deficiencies of Judaism; now the Buddhists are finally eliminating the baroque exuberance of the Hindu religion; now the Sikhs, the Muslims, the Baha'is, the humanists, the Marxists, and so on are going to realize the perfect society, and to quote the Hebrew Bible, now "the lion and the lamb are going to pasture together"—forgetting that to be a vegetarian is not paradise for the lion.²

There is no doubt that such reforms have often been very positive, and that this type of proliferation may be a healthy sign of human vitality. It may show the need to adapt old religions to new conditions and be a stimulus for the ancient systems to renew themselves. Yet there is no doubt either that, after a while, all such promises have been shattered and our situation has not substantially improved. "This is the war that will end all wars!" "This is the religion that will establish universal brotherhood!" After six thousand years there is a sad feeling of *dejà vu*. Religions have failed.

The *essential answer* tells us that such is the human condition. All humans are sinners; there is *arydyā*; Gilgamesh was defeated; we are living in *kāli yuga*; the original blessings have been withdrawn; *homo homini lupus*; and so on.

But all religions promise a remedy to the human condition: if you practice *mahāmudrā*, *agapé*, meditation, justice, *dharma*; if you obey the revelation, follow the injunctions of the guru, and so on, you shall be realized, redeemed, peaceful, saint, *jivanmukta*, and so forth. But the small *if* creeps in insidiously again. Apparently revelation, the *śruti*, the Qur'an, or whatever, is not enough. It seems as if all religions were noncommittal concerning the *if* and were skipping the problem. If grace is really the only thing that matters, and it is sovereignly free, then all the rest is not only superfluous, but harmful since it gives us false expectations and nurtures the pride of religious people.

Here is my plea for *metanoia*. "Conversion" has to apply to religions themselves, to religion itself, as an ongoing process. A fundamental and often neglected role of religions is to cope with failure, their own failures to begin with, and human failures in general. Perhaps they should concentrate less on *nirvāna*, *mukti*, realization, salvation, heaven, and the like—that is, on success—and instead, in a humbler way, direct their efforts at healing human wounds, at soothing the historical scars of humanity; in a word, forward the culture of peace more than the preaching of salvation. There is a certain wisdom in some African religions that are not so much concerned with the Supreme God, and instead direct their attention to the lesser Gods who create the trouble or offer the remedies.

² See Is 11:6–9 and 64:25.

Religions have failed because this is their *karma*, their nature. In fact, they constantly remind us of the law of the cross, the *naihkaranya karma*, the renunciation of the fruits, the disinterested action, the death to oneself, the love of God for God's sake, and so on. Religions are not the human panacea. They are, as the humans themselves are, itinerant, provisional, and imperfect. They show the moon on the pond, not the moon in the sky, to adapt a recurrent Buddhist metaphor. They reflect the divine, may point to transcendence, to the Absolute, but they are not the real moon; they are only the reflection on the waters of the human condition. They do not offer the solution; they help us to see the moon on the pond by advising us to keep the water clear and quiet. That's all. The *if* remains. They offer the ever renewed hope to go on living, striving, discovering, and not giving up the authentic human condition. They are not the answer; they are constant reminders of the very question: the human mystery, the unfathomable reality of Life. And some of the answers they give fail to convince many, and we may find them even wrong. They are not above this world, although they witness to us that this very world is more—not less—than a merely spatiotemporal reality.

For this they need to descend from their respective Olympus to the *kshetra*, to the *saṃsāra*, the arena of the strains and stresses of human life—in a word, to the field of the city, the *polis*, polities. We are still heirs of the great dualistic divide between the secular and the religious, between "religion" and "politics," between the cultivation of the soul (monasteries, ashrams, viharas . . .) and the cultivation of the soil (farmers, traders, laypeople).

This dichotomy has been lethal for both, the so-called religious sphere and the alleged only temporal activity. Contemplation has become barren, and the creative work of the layperson has degenerated into dehumanizing labor.

The synthesis cannot be made by juxtaposition, an eclectic mixture, or by absorbing everything into a religious domain. The work of the Nyingma monk, the *ora et labora* of St. Benedict, the *saṃsāra* is *nirvāṇa* of Nagarjuna, the *in contemplatione activus* of Ignatius of Loyola are some examples of such a synthesis.

I am not advocating that we make the world into a monastery or engage monasteries in social work. The transformation has to go deeper.

To come to our point: *the concern for peace is not an accidental religious issue*. Political peace is a question of life and death. Do we want a more serious religious issue? The role of religions is not fulfilled as chaplains to the armies. Religions have to become living forces to disarm the armies and convince the nations that Men have not paws to fight, but that they are endowed with intelligence and words to discuss, debate, dialogue. The decline of rhetoric—in its proper and traditional sense—is directly proportional to the increase of warfare. We soon don't speak to each other. Instead, we break relations and fight. Let me proceed now step by step: it is indeed Vishnu's (three gigantic strides).

1. The first meaning of *metanoia* is *repentance*.

Due to the influence of the Hebrew Bible, the Greek word of the Gospels and Christian Scriptures was sometimes translated as penance—which is not altogether wrong. If we repent we shall feel remorse and make the necessary satisfaction—penance.

At any rate this repentance has to be the first obligation of all living religions today. I single out two major fields: repentance of both the abuses and the uses of religion. I explain:

a. There is no doubt that all religions, without exception I daresay, have committed abuses. If I believe myself to be right and conclude from this that the other is wrong and harmful, the temptation of contempt, crusades, persecutions, exploitations, and wars against the "infidels" becomes almost irresistible. And what is more serious is that most religions have

justified inquisitions, tortures, *jihads*, condemnations, and elimination of the other under different names and with the most stupendously fallacious arguments. How can a *mleccha*, a *gōi*, even understand the lofty tenets of our sublime *dharma*, of our divine covenant? No need for me now to recall those dark pages of religious history that are still being written down with blood in our own days.

I say only one thing: the direct consequence of this repentance, the penance if we want, is to ask forgiveness; it is the catharsis to confess our own abuses. What have Hindus done to the Jains, Buddhists to the Taoists, Christians to the Muslims, Jews to the pagans, communists to the unenlightened, capitalists to the poor, and we could equally reverse the sentences and have all types of permutations up to terrorism. We have to ask forgiveness now, even for actions of the past. It is not a valid excuse to say that in many cases this was done a long time ago and that we have forgotten about it. This would only increase our guilt. We have easily forgotten the misdeeds of our ancestors because for us they were apparently not such big mistakes. But the victims have not forgotten, say, what the Spaniards did five hundred years ago on the other shores of the Atlantic.

I am not saying that Hindus should accuse the Muslims or Jews the Christians. I am saying that Hindus should accuse themselves, so the Jews, and not the other way round. To be brief, I may quote from a recent paper of Bede Griffiths, a Benedictine *saṃnyāśin* living for over forty years in an Indian *āshram*: "The record of the Inquisition in the matter of imprisonment, torture, and burning heretics can only be compared with that of Hitler and Stalin in modern times. . . . Could not the Roman Church make a public statement of its rejection of all such methods of which it has been guilty in the past . . . ?"³ I add further: and could we not humbly ask forgiveness to humanity at large and to the victims in particular? This example should apply to all religions.

b. This repentance should cover not only the abuses but also the superficial uses of religion. We should repent of the trivial watering down of the sublime teachings and examples of founders and saints and of having reduced religion to a diluted ideology for assuaging the pricks of conscience, generally of the powerful. I am not criticizing popular religion: on the contrary. I am chastising the superficiality of religions and of religious organizations in particular.

I may put it in a more academic way. Is it not true that, under one excuse or another, we have neglected the depths and basic intuitions of our respective religious traditions and succumbed to religious consumerism and religious banalities? I am not saying that every Man is a mystic or a saint. I am defending that the primal task of religion is to help us become aware of the unfathomable depths of our own being and of life in general, to make us conscious of who we are. I am not making things complicated. On the contrary. I am affirming that the fundamental things of life are precisely the most elemental ones. In a word, religions should again and again be converted into cultivating the precious and simple gift that has been entrusted to them, letting all other accidentals fall by the wayside. Religions are not clubs for entertainment.

2. The second meaning of *metanoia* is *change of mentality*. This change of mind is imperative in our times. If religions are not to be mere antique bastions of a deceased past, if they are not to become obsolete ideologies or museum pieces, or just the specialty of a selected few, they have to undergo a radical change of mind. There is no time now for mere reforms or good intentions, for merely regretting the past and promising that now we are

³ Paper written in Shantivanam, April 1991.

going to do it better, being again deceived by the mirage of the future. We need a radical conversion. Let us not forget that the common sense of the people shows a drifting away from established religions, except for the fundamentalist reactions mentioned earlier. To say it in popular language: we need to put our own house in order before saying anything about peace in the world.

I shall mention only two points: change of mind vis-à-vis other religions, and vis-à-vis the very meaning of religion itself.

a. With different degrees of tolerance, religions have, by and large, considered the outsider as a pagan, infidel, *goi*, *mleccha*, *kafir*, barbarian, undeveloped, primitive, and whatnot.

Along with historical and political reasons, and rather intimately related to those, there is a hermeneutical flaw that we clearly detect in our times of cross-cultural movements. By and large we have interpreted other religions with our own categories that are foreign to the other religions. We have misinterpreted the other. We have used often unconsciously, and thus unavoidably, a double standard: one from within to understand ourselves, and another from without to understand the other—and thus have not reached the self-understanding of the other.

The first task here consists in *dispelling misunderstandings*. And these are endemic, even among scholars. We go on calling many African religions polytheist only because we apply a Semitic idea of theism, ignoring that the so-called polytheists never have believed that they worship a plurality of *theistic theos*. We call nonbelievers those who do not believe the God of the cluster of today's prevalent religions. Many a Muslim theologian calls the Christian a tritheist, and Christian scholars call Jainism and Buddhism atheistic, and Confucianism a philosophy, extrapolating illegitimately their own understandings of the Absolute and of philosophy; most Hindu books on Christianity are generally appalling, and most Christian books on Hinduism insulting; and all the more when they are written in goodwill and sympathy; the Marxist idea of religion is a caricature of the worst specimen of European Christianity of over a century ago; and I could multiply the examples. In short, we have a distorted idea of the other; we do not follow what I have termed the *golden rule of hermeneutics*, which says that no interpretation is correct if the interpreted does not recognize itself in the interpretation.

This is my second point: to *understand the other*. But this is not an easy task. Without expanding here my thesis that understanding amounts to being convinced, I may only say that unless I somewhat share in the self-understanding of the other, I will not understand the other. Unless I do not somewhat believe in the truth of what the other believes I will make a caricature of the other's beliefs. Only truth is intelligible. If I do not take something to be true, I will not truly understand it. This has led me also to propose the *pisteuma* in religious phenomenology over against the *noéma* of an exclusively rational philosophy. Entrenched in our respective religious fortresses we are unable to understand the other, that is, to stand under the spell of the thing so understood. This is why without love no really personal understanding is possible.

This leads us to a third step: the necessary dialogical dialogue for both the understanding of our religion and of the religion of the neighbor. This type of dialogue is not a device to get the others on our side, to win them over. It is a genuine religious activity, and an essential requisite for peace. In point of fact any breach of peace begins with the breaking of dialogue.

Only then, I submit, shall we construct a solid basis for world peace. Without religious peace it is unrealistic to think of peace on earth—also on the political level. Only then shall we arrive at a mutual fecundation of the different religious traditions of the world, not to become one single religion, but to be mutually enriched and stimulated.

It is from the incentive of Oriental religions that Christianity may rediscover and perfect its own mystical core. It is from the influence of Christianity that Hinduism may find in its own tradition an urge for a greater social concern; it is from the Jain impulse to nonviolence that many a religion may reinterpret in a more effective way the general injunction of nonkilling; it is from the example of the primordial religions that the so pompously called "great" religions may begin to rediscover and reinterpret the deep and constitutive link of the human being with Nature. Or giving more doctrinal examples: love your neighbor as yourself does not mean love the other as another self, but as your own self. Follow your *svadharma* does not imply that you should not be concerned with the *dharma* of the neighbor. Do not desire *nirvāna* does not need to entail sheer passivity or killing the aspiration of Man toward perfection. Karma does not need to deny human freedom, nor predestination for that matter mean fatalism. Islam does not mean blind surrender, nor is original sin an excuse for accepting sinful structures, nor does eschatology need to mean putting all the cards on the final acts of Man or of history, nor does praying to God exclude praying to Nature, nor the reign of God in politics amount to defend theocracy, and so forth and so on. We should learn from one another. I mentioned humility at the beginning.

b. The change of mind applies not only to our vision of the others. It applies also to a fundamental conversion of the very notion of religion itself. All too often many religions have been so worried with the supernatural, the a-temporal, the *paramārtha*, that they have neglected the natural, the temporal, the *vyavahāra*. The result has been to make religion irrelevant for temporal life, and politics a mere strategy for choosing the best means to maintain uncritically the status quo. When the world at large is undergoing a radical change, religions cannot be insensitive to such a mutation. They can no longer live in ghettos or apartheids. Today's healthy separation between Church and State does not mean a dichotomy between Religion and Life. But for this, religions have to acknowledge the urgency of a genuine *metanoia*, a real transformation of the very notion of religion.

The transformation I am envisaging goes deeper than a mere reform, and deeper also than the mutual fecundation and stimulation described earlier. It is a passage from religion to religiousness, which in the Christian tradition I have termed a passage (*a pascha*) from Christianity to Christianness.

I may say here only this much. I sum it all up in two words: *sacred secularity*. I explain:

I consider the technocratic complex of today's prevalent and dominating kosmology [sic] nefarious for the human race, beginning with the epistemological fallacy of modern science that has made us believe that the main concern and task of human intelligence is measuring and drawing so-called logical conclusions. Yet not all is wrong with the techno-science, and thus replacement with another totalitarian ideology would be equally unsatisfactory. As Tagore put it, "True goodness is not the negation of badness, it is in the mastery of it" (*Creative Unity*, 123).

The most positive lasting effect of what we may call the European "enlightenment" is the slowly permeating conviction of the value of *secularity*, that is, of the definitive and not just provisional or, worse, illusory or diabolic character of the *saeculum*. *Saeculum* is the spatio-temporal, and thus material dimension of reality, what has often been translated as "world." By and large, modern religions (prophetic and mystical exceptions confirming the general rule) have neglected, to say the least, the cultivation of the world, the secular dimension of human life and of reality as a whole.

To come to our point: peace is not only the peace of the soul, the bliss of heaven, or the eschatological happy end to all things. Peace is also a political reality, a secular concept;

it has a socioeconomic aspect and so on. Religions cannot disconnect this aspect from the everlasting peace with which they, until now, were mainly concerned. They have to contribute to secular peace not as condescension or because of the urgency of the situation, but because this question is also an essential religious concern.

I said *sacred* secularity, but I could equally have said *secular sacredness*. What I mean is this.

The sacred is a constitutive dimension of reality and an essential character of Man. Man is *homo religiosus*. Secularism, as distinct from secularity, is antinatural and antihuman: it denies transcendence and becomes an ideology that pretends to organize life by means of rationally planned structures. A mere socioeconomic peace is not only impossible, it would not be peace at all. Human life is sacred, and so is society, and so is the world, the *saeculum*, and reality.

Transcendence cannot, does not exist alone, that is, without immanence, but transcendence is that dimension of freedom and infinity that is inherent in any being.

Transcendence being not only ungraspable but also infinite makes possible an immense variety of religious experiences and interpretations. I am not reducing religions to a single and vague religiosity. The different religious traditions of the world have here a place and a task. We have to spell out a little more this transformation, namely, *metanoia* of religion.

To put it bluntly, religions do not have the monopoly on religion—and this applies not only to any religion, but to the ensemble of the so-called religions, all put together.

Humanism, Marxism, nationalism, and scientism may be as much religions as the better-established forms of religion. I have to add immediately that to say religion does not automatically mean a good thing. Fascism, Nazism, and even racism can be lived as religions, albeit diabolical or false. Another thesis that I cannot develop here is that the very notion of religion is constitutively ambivalent. Where there is heaven there is also hell.

3. The third meaning of *metanoia* stands for *overcoming the mental*. If the first etymological sense of the word is *meta-noēin*, beyond thinking, change our mind, the *meta-nous* may also suggest transcending the mind, going beyond the mental, not reducing humanness to a mere *res cogitans*. We are more than mere reason—certainly not less—as the Jain *kevalin*, the Buddhist *bodhisattva*, the Hindu *yogi*, and the mystics of most traditions will remind us. Since the “enlightenment,” modern Man is reduced to a thinking machine, and thought mainly lessened to calculations and drawing conclusions. I mention here three aspects of this *metanoia*.

a. *The philosophical aspect.* With their unconfessed, often unconscious complex of inferiority vis-à-vis scientific modernity, most religions have repressed the mystical dimension of the human being, or, paying tribute to the same modernity, have reserved it for a specialized elite, the so-called mystics, thus accepting truncated anthropology as if Man were just an animal endowed only with material and intellectual needs. And the reactions to the opposite extreme of some religious fundamentalist movements of today are also instances of the same complex.

Overcoming the mental does not imply necessarily belief in ontological transcendence, acceptance of psychologically paranormal states of consciousness, or religious supernaturalism. It means to ascertain the anthropological urge for more and better, the human openness to the unknown, and the awareness that we are un-finished, that is, in-finite beings, that human nature is not perfect, finished. In Man there is an awareness of the Mystery, an awareness that there may be something unintelligible.

There is a mystical kernel in every human being, a sense of mystery, and a symbolic awareness that is not identical with intelligibility. But this third eye, third dimension, mystical

experience is not separable from both the intellect and from the senses; it is not a specialty; it cannot be isolated; it has to function in symbiosis with the rest of all our human faculties. Religions, which have traditionally been the reminders of such a sphere of the real, should undertake the task of reincorporating this dimension in ordinary human life (we may recall the tenth picture of the Man with his ox of the Zen tradition).

In the distinction between means and ends, religions should relativize the means and de-absolutize the ends. I spell this out:

The relativization of the means amounts to saying that all the wonderful means that religious traditions have excogitated or believed they have received by divine revelation are related to the particular individuals for whom the means are means, thus they are related to concrete situations. Relativism, which stands in contradiction with itself, is not relativity, which is what I defend. The five pillars of Islam, the Christian sacraments, the bodhisattva vows, the dharmic precepts, the injunctions of the Torah, and the like are wonderful, excellent, and valid means to reach the end of life, but no particular ritual or set of means can claim exclusivity and absoluteness. Or as the Castilian saying goes, *No todos los caminos son para todos los caminantes* (Not all roads are for all walkers).

Similarly concerning the ends: The end of human life, to put it this way, can be expressed only in a myth, not in a doctrine. The doctrine describes the moon we see reflected on the pond. The myth tells us that there is a moon in the sky. Within a given and accepted myth I may say heaven, *mukti*, *nirvāna*, beatific vision, annihilation, contribution to the future, justice, happy life, or whatever. And from our particular doctrinal contexts we may criticize other texts within the same context, but we should not unduly extrapolate a text outside its context. The real end of life can only be expressed mythically, and myths are not susceptible to any possible hermeneutic because they are the horizons that make any hermeneutic possible.

This double task of discovering the relativity of means and ends is only plausible if we do not stifle the mystical dimension of Man, if we do not deny the reality of the ineffable, and have undergone the experience of our human contingency.

b. *The contemplative aspects.* To transcend the mind does not mean to fall into irrationalism or to indulge anarchy. It entails becoming aware of what we may call the mystery, the unknown, the infinite, the divinity, or the like. It implies that we discover, surmise, accept, experience, believe, reckon with, or simply make room for what we call the sacred. I have made a spiritual defense of secularity, but I qualified it by adding *sacred* secularity. I shall not linger in describing the sacred. I only make a comment that I consider paramount.

It is not an important book that will save the world, nor a profound idea either that will bring peace to the world. If Man is the problem, Man is also the solution. But not a Man reduced to reason alone, mere sentiment, a wonderful praxis, but the fullness of all our being—and this fullness entails the cosmic and the divine. Man is not alone, not an island, not even a continent. We need the sky. Man is a *mesocosmos*, the converging point of all spheres of reality.

I may quote from a triple source, and I could cite the same experience from other traditions. A Jewish psalm (45:5 [44:4]) in its Greek and Latin version, later changed in modern translations, unites intrinsically truth, gentleness, and justice. It stresses the mediator role of that *prautes*, which the Latin renders as *mansuetudo*, and which probably is the positive word for *ahimsa*, nonviolence (the German *Sanft-mut* being perhaps an approximate translation). In a word, there is no truth without justice and no justice without truth, but the pair is totally ineffective without the essential and mediator role of the subjective and personal factor of friendliness, *Gelassenheit*, piety (in the classical sense). It is the same word of the

Gospels: "Blessed are the nonviolent." "Learn from me that I am *praüs* [gently firm, friendly strong, nonviolently enduring, *gelassen, sanftmütig*]," said Jesus. I quote now the present Dalai Lama (in an interview published in *India International Centre Quarterly*). After citing a Tibetan saying, "Many illnesses can be cured by one medicine: love and compassion," he adds, "Their practice in public life is typically thought of as impractical, even naïve." His Holiness unambiguously affirms, "This is tragic." He goes on to state, "Whether a conflict lies in the field of politics, business, or religion, an altruistic approach is frequently the sole means of solving it. Often, the very concepts we employ to mediate a dispute are themselves the cause of the problem."

And we use those concepts because we try to protect ourselves in sheer objectivity, making dehumanizing claims to be above truth or shielding ourselves in an equally objectified and impersonal justice that is not human. We are not objects. And we do this, we take refuge in mere ideas or objective doctrines, because we are fearful of taking the risks, or too hypocritical to expose our lack of coherence and sincerity. "May I be the doctor and the medicine," says Shantideva. Now, I ask, if religions renounce their most precious gift—their call to perfection, sanctification, realization, happiness, salvation, divinization, fulfillment, or the like—if they renounce the ideal of sanctity, what are they worth?

I am not saying that a disconnected or, worse, an unenlightened sanctity is the solution. I am affirming that sanctity is a powerful and indispensable factor in human life. Contemplation is more than theory and more than praxis. Those who are minimally engaged in contemplative meditation know by bitter but equally purifying experience how difficult it is!

c. *The metapolitical aspect.* I would like to emphasize that what I am going to say flows as a corollary to what I have said earlier. Without such a religious *katharsis*, all practical measures would be sterile or even counterproductive.

In numerous reliable testimonies, ranging from the Vedas to Aung San Suu Kyi,⁴ passing through the Gospels, the Qumran scrolls, and many others, we are reminded of the courage that is needed to carry out any authentic action in the world. This fearless attitude, however, is not simply a case of "where there is a will, there is a way." It is the automatic fruit of a pure heart. Many religious traditions, in fact, insist that this purity of heart is the primary condition for correct action and a fruitful life.

Peace

I have defined religions as paths to peace. This has the possibility to become the new myth for uniting the peoples of the earth together—and the function of religions could be to testify to all the virtues needed in order to achieve that fullness of humanity to which we all aspire.

The priority of peace is not a new religious concept. We are all familiar with wonderful writings on peace from many different religions; we all know that without peace of mind, nothing of value can be achieved, and we are all aware that peace is a fundamental religious category. This peace, however, is also political peace, with economic, historical, ideological, and other dimensions. Everything is interconnected, and it would be purely an illusion to claim it is possible to have inner peace without external peace. The bodhisattva waits for all living things to attain peace.

In conclusion, the problem of peace is an area in which we all meet, and the religious contribution to peace is directly proportional to our involvement in peace itself.

⁴ Aung San Suu Kyi won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991.

POLITICAL PEACE AS A RELIGIOUS GOAL

The novelty of religious awareness in our present-day age seems to lie in the fact that *concordia civium*, as Augustine said,¹ and *pax civilis*, intended as orderly concord, are no longer a concept that is merely juridical or regards the *pura securitas* of citizens (which, like *pax imperfecta*, has little to do with religion, according to what was upheld especially by Luther²), but it is a clearly religious goal.³ The reason is obvious.

The well-being of man in the earthly city is not simply a political question or even a moral problem, but a task that concerns man's very being, since the ultimate destiny of man is played out precisely in the *civitas hominis*—and not merely in preparation for heaven or as a reflection of a *civitas Dei*, but for the purpose of determining, as of now, man's final destiny.

The final destiny of the individual is not independent of what has happened in the earthly realm. If he has not achieved fulfillment in his life, this will remain a failure "forever." Of course, this realm is not only a realm of temporality but also of temporality, though without postulating an ensuing eternity. In other words, the political status quo has an expressly religious significance, since it refers immediately to the final *status hominis*.

Undoubtedly, there is no *pax* without *iustitia*, yet this cannot be separated from, on one hand, justification in relation to eternal life and, on the other, equity in relation to temporal existence, since everything constitutes unity. The *dikaiosynē* is the *iustificatio* that is impossible without *iustitia*. It is no coincidence that the concept of Christian *dikaiosynē* is becoming increasingly oriented toward justification and eternal salvation, gradually separating itself from human equity.

The history of this division in the Christian West perhaps sums up fully the problems we are dealing with. The essence of justice is neither *iustitia socialis* nor *iustificatio*; it is the righteous relationship of man with reality. The essence of justice consists precisely in the harmonious relationship between all the constitutive nexuses of man. Justice is the harmonious balance of man's total relationship with all reality—man cannot establish any true relationship with God if he does not first enter into a harmonious relationship with the

¹ *De civitate Dei* XIX.12–13, in Wilhelm Janssen, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, ed. O. Brunner, W. Conze and R. Koselleck, Vol. 2 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1979), s.v., "Friede," 549.

² At the same time, in fact, that Luther "largely interiorised (the concept of *pax spiritualis*), broke the Medieval union between spiritual peace and that of the world and degraded the latter, regarding it as external and theologically indifferent peace, as something that concerned no longer Christians but jurists (the professional class of the modern State)," Janssen, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, 559; see also the corresponding texts of Luther in that volume.

³ Translation of the last part of an extensive study titled "Der religiöse Grund des politischen Friedens," published in Italian in *La nuova innocenza*, vol. 3, Lampi azzurri (Sotto il Monte: Servitium, 1996).

Cosmos and, especially, with the rest of mankind. This total justice, intended as righteous order, may be said to be the ideal of peace.

This division is manifested in the change in the concept of salvation, *moksa*, *sôteria*, liberation. In almost all religions this means the total freedom of man and, therefore, also his health—that is, his wholeness and happiness. Little by little, this human liberation has separated into afterlife salvation, anthropological health, and political liberation—with extremely grave consequences to man, such as his own fragmentation. What the theology of liberation undertakes in the real-life context of the Latin American situation is a good example (though it does not represent a general model) of what we are trying to say here. Due to a lack of *iustitia* we are prompted to view the *iustificatio* of man as a threat. The salvation of man also (but not only) means his (political) liberation. The criticism we often hear raised against the "theology of liberation," that is, whether it regards pure "naturalism" or pure "politics," falls short of the mark and fails to take into account the new presuppositions, since it accuses this theology of being Marxist, or merely natural, or exclusively political, just because it only deals with what is temporal. The new slant, however, claims that temporality, and with it the whole range of human/temporal problems, are of a religious nature and also belong to theology.

The Religions for Peace (World Conference of Religions for Peace [WCRP]) movement, founded in 1970 in Kyoto and comprising ten world religions, may be considered, together with its antecedents, as a sign of the times. It is significant to hear the representatives of the different religions declare, sometimes in direct contradiction with their own traditional doctrines, that the struggle for human peace and, therefore, for *pax civilis* is not only an indisputable responsibility and commitment of all religions, but also has a certain priority in a modern-day context. A very clear manifestation of this new religious awareness was the UNESCO conference of December 1979 in Bangkok, where the representatives of eleven different religions gathered together to study the problem of human rights in the context of the various traditions. All agreed that political/social/economic rights are a religious matter, even though in the past this has not been considered of great importance.

At this point we would have to give a detailed review of all the religious-inspired movements arising in the course of the last few decades in order to justify the spiritual character of peace and of the defense of a relative pacifism, at least as a modern practice. Let us take, for example, the ecumenical Christian (albeit Roman Catholic) movement Pax Christi, which operates on the basis of the theory and practice of peace and which is progressively taking increasingly courageous initiatives. We are becoming more and more convinced that collaboration with today's war industries and military powers is incompatible with the Christian conscience.

Another example is Pope John XXIII's encyclical dated April 11, 1963, titled *Pacem in Terris*. The title itself is meaningful—it is not *pax in coelis* but peace on earth that is given religious importance. And, in fact, the contents of this encyclical deal with the sacralization of the secular fields of human activity.

If this is how things stand, it is easy to understand the importance of *pax civilis*. Here again, man's eternal destiny is put at stake, because it is final. Supposing that a human life fails to develop as it might or, rather, as it should, we would be faced with the abortion that tradition calls hell, from which there is no return. Let me take the liberty to speak here in first person. Thirty years ago, hearing about the dangers of the atomic bomb, my last reaction (the second to last was, naturally, one of worry and compassion) was this: well, so what? Are we not aware that we are all mortal, not only as individuals, but also as cultures and populations? Are we not aware that the solar system has already consumed more than half its potential

existence? What difference does it make if the world lasts a hundred billion years or four hundred billion years? What is it compared to eternity? That which is eternal in man is not easily impaired or destroyed. Even Napoleon, when, after a great victory, one of his generals pointed out to him how many had died in the battle, commented coldly, "Bah, in Paris just as many babies are born in one night!"

Yet if what is eternal in man is not separable from that which is temporal, and if all those who have not lived out their lifetime (*āyu, saeculum*) are and remain without any hope whatsoever; if the *kuruksētra* is therefore the *dharmakṣetra*, that is, if man's historical destiny is inseparably bound to his final destiny; if it is not possible to save only "souls," it means that, ultimately, what counts is also the political, *de facto*, and historical situation of mankind, not because this is the only existing aspect of reality, but because without it nothing exists.

There are no *duae civitates*.⁴ The religious man does not want to continue being a citizen of two countries. It is not possible to serve two masters. In any case, the citizenship of the religious man does not find fulfillment in the modern megalopolis, built only on the two dimensions of space and time (in spite of the desperate upward reaching of its skyscrapers). "As in heaven, so on earth." Certainly, although it is also true that "whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven," whatever happens on earth, therefore, happens also in heaven—as on earth, so also in heaven! Heaven and earth are also found in many religions and, indeed, merge together on the horizon. Yet this horizon belongs neither solely to the future nor solely to eschatology—it belongs to the "Here and Now," written with capital letters because they represent something more than mere spatiotemporal categories. The "peace of God" and the "peace of the world" can neither be identified (theocracy) nor separated (democracy). This is a nondualistic relationship that, though it cannot be referred to eschatology, can be fulfilled in temporality. In this sense, a *pax* that is limited to guaranteeing the safety of certain individuals, or providing countries with a certain outward stability, a type of peace that the Catholic tradition has sometimes called *pax imperata* or *pax violata*,⁵ is a *falsa pax* or *mala pax*,⁶ which does not fulfill what the tradition itself demands. The novelty of secularity consists in the fact that it does not identify the *finis aeternus* with an independent, prevalent afterlife, but with the point of convergence between this life and the next, which lies precisely at the center of human experience and is not only divine but also earthly; not only spiritual but also bodily; not only eternal but also temporal—and all united in nondualistic (i.e., hypostatic) wholeness.

It is important that none of what we have said here be misinterpreted as a negation of transcendence or mystery in defense of mere humanism. True peace is neither simply temporal nor belongs to an exclusively eschatological eternity; it is neither purely spiritual and interior nor solely political and social. It is not a question of regarding political peace as religious peace, as if *homo religiosus* were merely *homo politicus*.⁷ Neither is it a matter of leveling out religious peace with political peace. On the contrary, it is about overcoming this division between politics and religion without equating them. There is no such thing, in fact, as exclusively "political" peace or exclusively "religious" peace; simply because peace is

⁴ The *Civitas terrena* [earthly city]) is often called *huius saeculi civitas* [secular city] or also *civitas diaboli* [city of devils], while on the earth there is only the *civitas Dei peregrinans* [pilgrims of the city of God].

⁵ See Janssen, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, 561.

⁶ Ibid., 549.

⁷ Ernst Benz rightly wrote, "Revolution is the passage from a 'longing for' the kingdom of God to the active acceleration of its establishment through the use of violence" (*Eranos* 47 [Wiesbaden-Ascona: Eranos Foundation, 1978], 26).

human, it is inseparably both "political" and "religious." Indeed, Christians should not find this very difficult if they are able to think about incarnation without considering it only as a privilege of the Son of Man; or if, through the tradition of *theosis*, they can see that all the children of man are called to become also children of God. This does not mean, however, that peace in the world is just a small part of divine peace.

The famous correspondences of the *Upanisad* might perhaps help us to focus more closely on this question. There is a double correlation between the individual man as a microcosm and the universe as a macrocosm. Or, as modern physics has discovered, every elementary particle is, in actual fact, a field (magnetic, electric, subject to the force of gravity, atomic, etc.), which coincides or is coextensive with the entire universe. Ultimately we are dealing with the ancient idea of the three worlds, *triloka*. What I would like to emphasize here is the mutual influence of the world and that which surrounds it, in relation to peace. Every man, when he is in the right place and has the right attitude, reflects the harmony of the world; cosmic peace, therefore, depends (so to speak) on the inner harmony of every being. Inner peace that is only private *pax spiritualis*, however, is not really peace, because peace is not private property. *Pax* is not only *spiritualis*, but also corporeal and social. Everything contributes, in the two directions—or, rather, the innumerable directions of all beings—to preserving and creating (but also destroying) the peace of the universe. What Christian spirituality called "priestly vocations," whether in suffering or prayer or action, correspond, in a Buddhist or Hindu context, to *karma* and the microcosmic and macrocosmic equivalents. A saint far removed from the world can do more for peace than an activist moved only by hate.

In conclusion: the atomic danger may make the man of today conscious of the fact that the *status quo* is not peaceful; consequently, peace cannot mean keeping the *status quo*. Ultimately, the secular mentality, on its part, has directed our attention toward the *fluxus quo* as a religious goal and, therefore, toward the religious task of creating this *fluxus quo*. The combination of these two experiences brings about a change in the human attitude to peace. Political peace and religious peace merge together, not because one is converted to the other, but because the separation of these two human spheres is no longer sustainable.

Consequently, peace is neither that of the *status quo* nor that of the *fluxus quo*, but lies midway between the two, that is, in the situation that acts as a bridge without breaking continuity—though this does not mean that there are no transformations. This is where difficulties in achieving peace can be seen clearly. The passage from the *status quo* to the *fluxus quo* must also be peaceful and avoid compromising a certain shared harmony. Ever since the Stone Age, man has known that it is more painful to remove an arrow from the body than to stick it in. If the social body today is wounded with many arrows it cannot be an easy task to remove them.

I write these lines during the festival of St. Francis of Assisi, and I read in the paper that, just today, on the eight hundredth anniversary of his birth, the four orders of the Franciscan families of the Catholic Church, who altogether number over a million members (professed and lay), have joined the already active human appeal (or perhaps we should say "cry"), directed to all the governments of the four corners of the globe, to destroy all nuclear arsenals, stop all research in the field of atomic weapons and atomic experiments, and renounce the use of these weapons. The last popes had already spoken of this, but perhaps more rhetorically. It is a fact, nonetheless, that "political" peace has now been converted into a religious goal. And here the tension between religion and politics becomes evident. While an attitude of a purely *Realpolitik* nature declares itself to be in favor of peace but continues to uphold the

ancient principle "Si vis pacem, para bellum,"⁸ a genuinely religious attitude will always defend the vulnerability that a sincere desire for peace involves. Practically speaking, attempts at disarmament have existed for decades, but as yet none have actually been successful, because they all harbor a contradiction—that of wanting to establish peace according to one's own rules. It is not strange that such attempts have been limited exclusively to diplomatic gestures and that, in any case, it has not been possible to actually provide any real proof. Only a truly religious attitude may have the strength and sense of responsibility to establish a relatively unconditional peace. And here transcendence is manifest.

Peace at the conditions of one side only is victory, not peace—victory can only be political. Peace must have an inner religiosity, otherwise it is not peace. Peace in the world does not mean the victory of one single ideology, our own. The religious attitude paradoxically relativizes the needs of politics. A truly religious spirit may reach a certain human fullness even in a dictatorship or an unjust system. We cannot separate "religious peace" from "political peace," yet true peace is neither purely "religious" nor purely "political."

⁸ The phrase is from Flavius Vegetius Renatus: "Qui desiderat pacem, praeparet bellum" [he who desires peace, let him prepare for war], *Epitoma rei militaris* XI.3 prol.

A MEETING-POINT FOR RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES

"Is It Not Justice to Repay Evil With Evil?"

I will begin straightforwardly with a story I learned from a Jewish teacher.¹

In the Middle Ages, a famous rabbi lived in a country of Northern Europe where, as in any good Jewish community, there were two disputing factions. One of these factions went to the rabbi to tell him what disasters the other was causing, and the rabbi answered, "You are right, you are absolutely right!"

When the other faction found out, they also went to the rabbi to accuse the others of all their wrongdoings. The rabbi gave them the same answer: "You are right, you are absolutely right!" At this point a group of intellectuals (who, of course, always think they know best) went to the rabbi and told him, "Now listen here, Rabbi, with all due respect, you are agreeing with both sides—this is not possible." And the rabbi replied again, "You are right, you are absolutely right—it is not possible."

This story serves to introduce my personal confession. I hear the Buddhists speak, and I think they are right. I hear the Jews speak, and they are also right. I hear the Hindus speak, and I think the same thing. I hear a layman speak, and he is also right. They all seem to be right. How is this possible? Could it be, perhaps, that reality does not obey the principle of noncontradiction? We are still too dependent on Parmenides. Reality, Being, has made no vow of obedience to the laws of Thought. Justice as an attribute of reality must not be judged on the basis of reason alone—the heart also has something to say. Justice cannot be reduced to mere rational syllogism. We have separated love from knowledge, so we can no longer know what justice is.

I chose to tell this story of the Jewish Diaspora for another reason also, and that is that I am uncomfortable with all labels. Am I Christian? Yes, truly. But I am also Hindu. Why must identity be dominated by the principle of noncontradiction? What I am is not what makes me different from others; perhaps what I *am* is also what others *are*.

There are different types of mentality. When I say, for example, that I do not feel I classify either as a Christian or as a Hindu according to the current (and, I would say, institutional) interpretation of these definitions, I do not mean I am not Christian or I am not Hindu. I mean that my religious *identity* does not correspond to a conceptual *identification*.

Every tradition has not only different beliefs but also different forms of thought, that is, forms of a conscious approach to reality, which represents a challenge, but also a great

¹ Paper presented at an intercultural conference organized by the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan in 2004 and published in *Humanitas* 2 (Brescia) (2004): 343–52.

opportunity for overcoming our limitations. In short, interculturality is today a cultural imperative and a condition for peace; it is important, therefore, to interpret what "justice" means interculturally.

Great injustice reigns in the world; there are many forms of September 11, many of which are even more cruel and unjust. A long time ago, Kung Fu-zu (whom we call Confucius) was asked the following question: "Master, where would you suggest beginning in order to attain justice?" And he answered, "I would begin by giving the word its true meaning." We use so many words and often do not fully realize that to understand the meaning of a word we must know the complete *text*, as well as its *context*, and also the *pretext* that motivated the word. When Dante condemns to hell for all eternity those who have committed a "small mortal sin," the punishment should not be likened to "an eye for an eye," since eternity does not last even five minutes. Well acquainted as he was with Thomas Aquinas, moreover, Dante knew that "sinners, being such, are not sinners." The comparison, therefore, is misleading, yet it serves to illustrate the need for an intercultural approach to religious and, therefore, profoundly human problems.

We must not confuse *concepts*, "conceived" in the heart of a culture, with *symbols*, which require the active participation of another and, therefore, the dialogal dialogue, if the communication is to be real. Words are more than signs, more than terms that indicate an object according to a common code, as in modern science. Words are symbols that carry the crystallized collective experience of a people or human group in a given time and space. No one has the monopoly over the meaning of words, which, unlike signs, are by nature polysemic.

Perhaps the time has come for the history of mankind to reconsider all the old paradigms whose only use is to help us take a step forward in the history of the Cosmos and the history of man. This is the sense of every authentic tradition, which is not archaeology. If justice signifies good, then clearly evil cannot be repaid with evil! When the intention is to apply justice, no one wishes to do evil. What is evil to some is not to others. Death is evil to the condemned man, but it is not considered as evil toward the society that the judge wishes to protect. The judge, who represents a certain conception of justice, repays the evil of the criminal with something that he believes is not evil. And here we see how things are viewed differently as the result mainly of cultural differences. Perhaps, as some believe, it is the will itself that is evil, although there is certainly no such thing as an "evil will," since every will operates *sub ratione boni*, albeit egoistically at times.

"It is not justice to repay evil with evil"; this is true, but it often does not prevent evil from being repaid with a so-called lesser evil. Apart from the somewhat cynical observation that based on the theory of the lesser evil very often the "greater evils" are committed, the question remains as to whether it is justice to repay the (greater) evil with the (lesser) evil. Can evil be quantified? Could it be that we have accepted indiscriminately the form of scientific thought that tends to quantify everything?

This brings me to a second point: Can reason be our only tool? Is it rational, or even reasonable, to forgive seventy times seven, or is it unjust to do so? The appeal to reason is essential and necessary. We must be careful not to fall prey to irrationality, and we must defend reason as a universal human value. Interculturality, nevertheless, brings out two very important aspects. First, there are many types of reason. Elementary mathematical reason does not allow room for tolerance: $2 + 2 = 4$, and only 4, not one one-hundredth less. Perhaps "it is not right to respond to evil by doing evil to the criminal." The law in force would not accept this statement—but is it really so incontrovertible? If we claim that punishment is not evil we are misinterpreting the meaning of the words. Thus casuistry is introduced, and in this department reason alone is supreme.

Here we must make an important observation. Since the very beginning, the human world has always been a religious world, and many religions believe that injustice can be "repaired" with forgiveness and that forgiveness requires repentance. Repentance, however, demands punishment, which is considered not as an evil but as a medicine. One almost tragic example is that of a certain Christian theology of Redemption: God the Father forgives us through the punishment that he allowed to be inflicted on his own Son. This *theologumenon* has become secularized in our current juridical system, which, in theory, regards prisons as a medicine—even though today practically no one believes this any longer and, for this very reason, the redeeming aspect of punishment itself is lost. This is not the place, of course, for "redeeming" Christian theology from such a sadistic aspect, although I believe it is both possible and urgent to do so.

If the roots of this, however, are in a certain religious notion of a God of vengeance, a mechanistic *karma*, and so on, then the remedy must come from the same sources.

This is the serious question that the subtitle of this chapter asks, that is, whether "religious traditions" can offer us an answer that, without being irrational, is able to help us at least entertain the doubt that perhaps it is not right to deal with the problem of justice with reason alone. The problem is a delicate one, because the events of history show us that religious ideologies are not always models of justice.

Nevertheless, the question remains: Is it possible to tackle the problem of evil with reason alone? Can biblical mercy or Buddhist compassion find rational justification?

Reason is a great human faculty, but it is not the only one. Man is driven more by love, passion, willpower, or hate than by reason. The latter, however, has a right of veto that is unquestionable. Any action *against* reason must be rejected.

Without doubt, reason is polysemic and polyvalent. There are certainly different types of reason—instrumental, historical, logical, sentimental, and so on—but should the functioning of all these human faculties also be termed as rational?

There are clearly many different concepts of reason, just as there are many concepts of religion and many other things, but should such an ambiguous concept also be called "reason"? Is it not a Western reaction resulting from the abuse of various forms of unquestionably irrational religiosity? Is rationality the only "specific difference" of the human being? Tacitus wrote that slaves were forced to speak the language of their masters. Could it not be that theologians feel obliged to speak the language of the leaders? Could it not be that dominant dialectical thought leaves rational thought no alternative but nonrational thought?

A "meeting of religious traditions" might, perhaps, free the world from this misgiving. Religion is not obliged to accept the dilemma of rational or irrational.

Perhaps justice does not fall within the context of reason *alone*, which does not mean that it falls within the context of irrationality. Is the mercy of the Abrahamic religions, for example, obliged to exclude justice? During the Vietnam War, a Vietnamese friend of mine in the United States said ironically, "Excuse me, my English is not good. How do you pronounce this word: 'justice'? 'Just us'?"

This quip is not only "political," but also philosophical—"justice," "just us," applies not only to our interests but also to our standards, our values, and our forms of thought. This is the problem of pluralism, which must not be confused with anarchic relativism. The relativity of pluralism is not relativism. Pluralism arises from the knowledge of our contingency, which prevents us from absolutizing everything.

When I say that the problem of justice is a problem directly associated with "religious traditions," I mean that it is not a question of *mere* rationality. Man cannot be reduced to a rational being; man is a religious animal, and not only because of the worship of the

dead or the temples of the various divinities, as archaeologists and anthropologists have claimed for the past couple of centuries. Man is a religious being because he finds within himself an awareness that opens him up to the mystery, which he then discovers is imminent in all things.

Despite its Latin meaning, *ius*, justice, is more than a "juridical" question or a system of political life. Justice is something that belongs essentially to the *humanum* and not merely to the preservation of the *status quo*, as we are reminded by the prophets of Israel. The actual Sanskrit word for justice, *dburma*, means "that which keeps the world together."

When I say that the Sermon on the Mount is the universal code of justice I am not putting forward a theological or even a philosophical hypothesis. I am making a statement that is (at least partly) empirical, inasmuch as the past six thousand years of human experience, following a mechanistic conception of commutative justice, have brought us neither justice nor peace. Perhaps it is time to try another path, which does not necessarily have to be defined as Christian.

Some years ago, just for "fun," I sent to a dozen or so friends, all Western philosophers, a list of phrases translated into Latin, asking them to identify the sources. None of them realized that the sources not only were not Christian, but dated back well before Christianity. They were phrases like these:

- "Do not hurt your neighbor, even if you are provoked."
- "Do no harm either with thoughts or with actions."
- "Do not utter words that can cause pain to another."
- "Despise no one."
- "Tolerate false accusation patiently; do not be irritated by those who are angry; bless those who curse you."
- "This is the greatest of all virtues: treat others as you yourself would be treated."
- "Do not do to your neighbor what you would not want him to do to you."
- "Man always follows the righteous law when he sees himself in another."
- "Even if you are poor, rejoice in the prosperity of others."
- "Do not refuse hospitality, not even if enemies ask you for it."

These were followed by the metaphor of a tropical country:

- "Do the trees not give shade even to those who are about to cut them down? Do not act harshly toward your enemies; to those who treat you harshly, respond with kindness."

When Kung Fu-zu was asked the meaning of virtue, he replied, "Do not do to others what you would not want them to do to you."

These quotations come from different traditions, none of which are Christian, Jewish, or monotheistic. They are just a few of the many fine words that have been spoken but, unfortunately, not practiced enough, and the results are clear. This brought me to the conviction that, after almost six thousand years of historical experience, the so-called Sermon on the Mount—which, as we have seen, is not exclusive to Jesus of Nazareth—is the only *Realpolitik* that has the possibility of establishing a just regime in this world of ours. This would involve, however, a change in the cosmological and anthropological vision of the dominant culture, which is still based on the principle of *homo homini lupus*, with the very sad consequence that, for example, since 1945 the number of prisoners, refugees, and soldiers has increased dramatically year after year. Our world lives in fear—otherwise we would not have thirty

million armed men, five hundred million "legal" weapons for private use, and armaments expenditure exceeding any other public spending.

According to the official statistics of a decade ago, the training of a Western soldier costs seventy times the education of a student.

"It is not justice to repay evil with evil." As I have said, the only way to overcome the *petitio principii* implied by these words is to recognize that the evil with which evil is repaid is not justified by its effectiveness in eliminating the previous evil. The end does not justify the means, since the ontological *status* of good and evil transcends both the "good intentions" and the results. In other words, evil has a transcendent referent because justice is also something more than mere legitimacy.

And here we have the contribution of the "religious traditions," which recognize that good and evil are religious categories and not the result of an exclusively democratic decision.

I do not know whether this is a point of convergence or a point of dispute, but it is certainly a common point that allows dialogue without trivializing the mystery of evil. Put differently, justice is not merely a juridical but also a theological (religious) concept.

It is significant that good Christian theologians have split into two one single word of the Christian Scriptures: *dikaiosynē* (justice). In Italian at least the two words are related: *giustizia* (justice) and *giustificazione* (justification); in English it is worse: "righteousness" and "justice." The Gospel word *dikaiosynē* is not found either in Homer or in Hesiod. The classic words are *dike* and *thémis*, as well as others that have different connotations. Christian theologians have translated the *dikaiosynē* of the gospel as social and human justice (for living in the world) on one side and supernatural justification (for going to heaven) on the other. The misunderstanding of the so-called theology of liberation of our time is that when one side speaks about justice, the other side fails to understand that the two things go together and that it is not possible to reach heaven if one is deaf to the cries of men on earth.

In the countries of ancient Christianity, justice was not separated from grace, and in many countries political justice was dispensed by a Ministry of Grace and Justice—named so because forgiveness belongs also to justice. This is only possible in a religious regime—I do not say a theocratic or even clerical regime, because, as the Bible says, only God can forgive. Men cannot forgive, and I doubt that any justice that excludes the possibility of forgiveness can be called such—or else we come back to "*just us*." The field of justice, therefore, surpasses (does not negate) that of reason.

Ontologically speaking, forgiveness means to bring what was real back to nothing. If creation means to generate from nothing, forgiveness is an act of de-creation, in that the act that is forgiven returns to nothing. Therefore, as the Gospel clearly states, only by receiving the Holy Spirit can we forgive sins. Only God can forgive sins. Only a divine or glorified nature (and this is the Trinitarian mystery) can forgive even the enemy.

Too often we tend to fossilize our thought, so it may seem strange to talk about de-creation. The idea that God created at the beginning of time (as if time itself had not also been created) and then stopped (on the "seventh day" he rested—and is still resting) has caused us to forget that if God creates he is doing so continuously: this is the *creatio continua* of Scholasticism. If we accept creation we must accept that it can only be continuous; consequently, forgiveness means that the forgiven deed is not "re-created" and falls into nothingness. Interculturality prepares us for a new vision of the universe.

The problem is very serious. We are living in a time in which people are realizing that what we call justice seems to be despised, disregarded, unpracticed, or worse still, hypocritically falsified. "Not all those who say 'Lord, Lord...' Not all those who cry "justice, justice!" *Intelligenti pauca*. It is obvious that the problem cannot be solved with intellectual theories

alone, but neither can it by following the praxis of rushing to defend either one side or the other. When a solution cannot be found, then perhaps we must presume that the categories through which we are approaching the problem are not suitable instruments.

Might this be "meeting point for religious traditions"? First of all, the dominant culture has identified religion with the so-called religious organizations, which are tolerated as long as they are content to remain confined within their respective "enclosures" without affecting public life. Every religion recognizes, in one sense or another, the sphere of transcendence. This sphere is the referent in discerning between good and bad, just or unjust. Yet this referent, for the very fact of being transcendent, transcends the jurisdiction of every institutionalized religion—however necessary it may be.

If there are two ants on a sheet of paper and I draw a line between them, they cannot cross from one side to the other without coming into contact with the dividing line, but one thing they can do—they can jump over it. This jump is the leap to transcendence, the leap into the third dimension, which seems to have been forgotten over the past few centuries, especially in the West, due to being abused by some and unpracticed by others.

Perhaps the time has come for secular and religious people to join forces in order to build a more righteous world—we are close to rock bottom, and the prevailing civilization has no future. This leap does not mean reaching pure transcendence, which even philosophically is contradictory, since thought itself injures the pureness of transcendence. Transcendence and immanence are two poles of the same reality; one cannot exist without the other. I spoke of ants, rather than animals, capable of leaping, not to belittle man but to emphasize that to make this leap a special strength is necessary, which some religions call grace and others know by other names—a strength that certain traditions believe has been given to all of us and others to just a few. All agree, however, that it is a leap.

Here I should clear up a possible misunderstanding—this leap is made above the earth, but by springing from it and returning to it. This is what I mean when I say that transcendence always implies immanence. Religions are open to the transcendent, but they begin from immanence and return to it. Seeking to banish religions to the other world, therefore, while overlooking this one, would make them irrelevant to man's life on earth. This does not mean, of course, falling into theocracy. The truly transcendent does not allow itself to be manipulated. In philosophical terms, we could say that the transcendent cannot be the main premise for any syllogism.

"It is not justice to repay evil with evil" because justice indicates an inclination to good, and this good does not depend exclusively on what we consider to be right; this would be a vicious circle. This good is transcendent, though inseparable from its immanence to man.

This paper was presented at a conference organized by a Catholic university that is not afraid to let other voices speak up. Implicitly, what is being said is that it is not right to determine what justice is from one perspective only; that it is not justice to subordinate evil to what we consider as right, because this would cause us to fall into tautology, and that the problem of evil is a religious matter, because it affects the very destiny of man.

I suppose that the choice of theme is partly a result of the turning point to which the last wars have brought us. We might put forward a few questions to "religious traditions": "Is it justice to respond to terrorism with antiterrorism? Is it justice to respond with a war to possible threats to the status quo? Is it justice to avoid evil with evil?" It is certainly not justice to commit evil even with the best intentions, nor to use violence to awaken the consciousness of the people.

DIVERSITY AS A PRESUPPOSITION FOR UNITY BETWEEN POPULATIONS

We are the true reflection of the world situation, and it would be unrealistic to think we have the solution for this world that is so devastated.¹ To believe we have the answer would be to fall into the very trap we are trying to avoid—that of monoculturalism. It would also mean unduly extrapolating the scientific mentality to deal with a situation that is not scientific. Modern science operates through problem-solving paradigms. Life is not an enigma to be revealed or a problem to be solved. Life is a mystery to be lived, and this implies conscious experience on our part.

Let us place ourselves in a historical context: *homo sapiens* has lived on the earth for thirty thousand years. To better understand our current situation we should also bear in mind that the people who inhabit the world today are more numerous than all those who have ever lived before them. Counting them all, the people who have lived from the time of *Pithecanthropus erectus* onward do not reach the mark of 5.6 billion human beings; today the same number are alive. This is like saying that, in a certain sense, we represent the majority of the human race, because never before have so many people lived on the earth. It is as if time has become shorter or, rather, as if time were not a linear, consistent highway. What I want to say is that the human adventure of our time is like a concentration of man's destiny on the earth. We count for more than the entire past history. If we were to have a final democratic judgment today, our contemporaries would have more votes than all the others. Never before, however, has there been such conscious, unjustified injustice, such famine, so many deaths. . . . Today's injustice could be summed up by the fact that 18 percent of the human race consumes 80 percent of the total energy at our disposal, and this imbalance, unlike in the past before we reached such limits, means that one person's wastage causes another's poverty. The earth's resources are not infinite, and we have irresponsibly speeded up the law of entropy. It is not simply a question of recycling paper, but of becoming aware of the current state of the earth.

Another difference lies in the fact that in the past human inequality was generally believed (rightly or wrongly) to be justified in the eyes of the people themselves (as in the castes or the feudal system, for example). Many religions did nothing but justify the existing status quo. One of the new developments of today, perhaps, is that when we become aware of the situation we cannot bear the fact that these injustices are institutionalized, that this situation of disorder has no justification whatsoever, neither human nor divine, neither technological nor any other kind. In the past centuries people were perhaps not very aware of the fact,

¹ Original text: "La diversidad como presupuesto para la armonía entre los pueblos," published in *Wiñay Marka* (Barcelona, May 20, 1993): 15–20. Translated by Geraldine Clarkson.

for example, that slavery was aberrant, and even great and wise men, such as those spoken of in the history of the West, basically accepted it. Today there are many people who still do not believe that Capitalism (to give a parallel example) may be aberrant. Our current situation is unique, both historically and politically. I would say, therefore, that in order to tackle it effectively but serenely we need something that is much easier to say than to do. It is extremely difficult to be fair, even more difficult to be just, and even more so to preach understanding in the face of institutionalized torture and endemic injustice. We cannot be expected to just be patient and resigned. What we need is magnanimity, a greatness of soul that is not easy to achieve. This greatness of soul (*mūhātma*) that is necessary in facing the current situation, however, is not something secondary or incidental at the stage in which contemporary man finds himself.

This magnanimity reflects both on action and on theory, both on compromise and on detachment (*asakta*, non-attachment, disinterestedness). A good dose of intellectual courage and spiritual boldness is needed to tackle the contemporary world, and great daring to leap into action when it is clear there is no other way out.

Those who are unable to adopt this attitude will not be of much help at all in improving the situation. In the words of the Indian sage Śāntideva: "If you become angry because another is angry and you are furious because another is furious, all you will gain is that there will be two more angry and furious people in the world." This is not the solution, though this does not mean we should be insensitive.

After describing this greatness of soul and this serenity in the face of intolerable realities, I now enter the heart of the matter by making a few observations on the diversities between cultures.

In my opinion, diversity cannot be pursued, because otherwise it would fall into one of the worst traps of technocratic modernity. Is this not the pride of modern science, which predicts what will happen and how things will behave? I would venture to say that those who live life as a project to be fulfilled in the future will be unhappy until death. They will never fulfill it. The future is only a mirage of the present, which does not mean that, as such, it is not real. This illusion of the future, this mirage, is one of the most powerful forces of one or several of our present-day civilizations—though it is not multicultural and, certainly, it is not universal. I am referring to the myth of history, which should not be confused with the experience of time.

I would like to digress slightly here and make a fundamental distinction between human invariants and cultural universals. We all have a body; we all eat, walk, and speak; we all like certain things, and so on. These are human invariants, but not cultural universals. It is precisely with regard to the dominant culture that we have been made to believe in the existence of cultural universals. To some people, eating means ingesting protein, to others staying in shape, to some it is a very pleasant communal activity, to others it means entering into communication with divinity, and so on. There are no cultural universals.

In other words, one of the manias or, to put it more elegantly, one of the most brilliant inventions of the West (brilliant because of how quickly we all fall for it) is the discovery of classification. Open any university or school textbook and you will see how everything is classified. We classify everything. The Tree of Porphyry extends to everything—living/nonliving, material/nonmaterial, so/so, sulfuric/sulfurous, and so on. We catalog everything: Indian/non-Indian, Christian/non-Christian, rich/poor, north/south, believers/nonbelievers, good/bad, and so on—which, obviously, is not very useful at all. When we fall into the trap of classification there is no way out. Once our brain has begun to classify, not only do computers appear but there is no way to escape their power.

We are not able to think without classifying. Thinking is not the creative act through which man knows (i.e., identifies with) reality and thus alters it. Thinking has become confused with calculating, that is, classifying. Logic has been transformed into a logic of classes, or else it has degenerated into a class struggle.

I will not dwell longer on this, because what I wanted to say was just that cultures are not any type of species, they cannot be classified, and once we begin to classify them we begin to create the possibility of cultural genocides, because a culture that is a little more useful to me than another is obviously given a higher place in the classification and supersedes that which occupies a lower place.

When we begin to classify, we begin to break away from reality. Every classification implies a common foundation—and each culture has its own. The classification of cultures is an intercultural sin. In short, cultural diversity is not diversity, since there is no common foundation on which to place it. We believe, more or less unconsciously, that a culture is superior if it is able to include many others and allows us to perceive their diversity, without denying the existence of vaster cultures and more limited cultures.

What exists (which is more difficult to express in our language, accustomed as it is to universalizing extrapolation) is the incommensurability between cultures. Every culture is a world, every culture is a universe and not merely a way of seeing and living reality. It is a different reality, and I do not see this reality. It is shown to me by another person, revealed to me when I listen to him. And I listen only when I love him. And I love him only when I know him. Everything is connected.

This does not mean there are no intercultural myths to enable us, at a given time, to unanimously condemn cultures considered degenerate or inhuman. Yet we cannot absolutize the criteria. Suffice it to say that today the cultures of war are also accepted. The ambiguity of the word "interculturality" conceals a trap. It is obvious that we must be open to other cultures, that we cannot remain locked inside ourselves but must lift the barriers of restriction that limit each of us. This is clear, but to think that I can be supercultural, above all cultures, because I know more, because I am "intercultural," would be to fall into the negative myth of interculturality.

Myth is what we believe in without realizing; it is evidence itself. It is, to be exact, the horizon of intelligibility that allows us to end the search that would otherwise go on forever.

Healthy interculturality is that which, by osmosis, assimilation, and stimulation, opens up to what is positive in other cultures. Pluralism is the recognition of the incommensurability of cultures. Every vision of the world deserves respect, even if we do not understand it, even if we consider it bad and counterproductive, in which case we will oppose it, but with respect. As we know, before the Indians of Canada cut down a tree they ask its forgiveness, and after cutting it down they give thanks—and these two operations are carried out without any trace of cynicism, because, after all, the tree itself will be glad to have been of use to the human being who has cut it down. I am not defending naïve "pacifism" (assuming that we reserve this word for critical pacifism). The tree (the Indian's tree, that is, not the forests of the Amazon) must be cut down.

If every culture is unique, there is no such thing as a "superculture." Cultures are different and defy any attempt on the part of reason to classify them.

I can make a thousand classifications, as long as I bear in mind that the principle of classification is only useful to me for pragmatic purposes, and does not help me to experience and understand culture, since if we do not live within it, we cannot understand it. Consequently, the very idea of a single world order, for example, which basically means one single culture, is a sin against humanity. Aspiring to reduce the human being to

something that can basically be classified and manipulated represents a denigration of what he is. And this is the trap.

When I say "pluralism" I do not mean plural; when I say, for example, in more philosophical terms, that the truth is pluralist, I am not by any means saying that there are many truths, but just that truth is neither one nor many, and that it cannot be quantified in any way. If we only use rational reasoning to see reality, then we must sum up, divide, and compare. Life, however, is not merely a function of rational reasoning, nor can reasoning be reduced to the creation of syllogisms.

One great sin of our time, which many times we are unable or do not know how to avoid, is the reduction of a culture to folklore. The idea that cultures mean a certain way of dancing, eating, dressing, and so on is the first step to cultural imperialism. I do not go into this here, but I would like to briefly mention the strategy of opposition.

First of all, I would insist on overcoming the crypto-inferiority complex that almost all the cultures of today possess, except for the dominant culture, which has a strong concept of superiority. Of the cultures with which I am familiar, I would make an exception for the Bengali culture, which does not (yet) have any inferiority complex. Most cultures suffer from a crypto-inferiority complex that makes them strive to be more modern. If this inferiority complex, which is very deeply rooted, is not overcome it will bring us to a cultural slavery such as has never existed in our history. Five hundred years is too short a time; I would speak about the past five thousand years, during which we have developed the habits and mental forms we possess today. We have not yet realized that, if this complex is not overcome, the world will go from bad to worse and end in catastrophe.

I believe that one of the culprits responsible for this inferiority complex, this virus that is destroying from within the vast majority of the cultures that are still alive today, is modern science. It is very significant that, generally, the native leaders of these cultures of Africa, India, and other continents (many of whom, of course, have been "educated" in "modern" institutions) strive to be modern and rational and uphold the value of science and technology, considered an achievement of the entire human race. I believe that if the majority of cultures that come into contact with the so-called modern world do not overcome this inferiority complex (no easy task, to be sure), it will not be eliminated. This is the temptation for everyone to want to build airplanes, computers, and so on, and have that material power that is so dazzling. The problem of modern science is a huge problem that cannot be underestimated or neglected. It must in no case be elevated to the rank of the absolute or a condition without which we cannot live a completely normal life today. If we fall into this trap, everything will be swallowed up by scientific phagocytosis.

Here I must add a few considerations. Not everything in other cultures is obscure. It is a historical fact that they have been through very dark periods, but it is also true that a great reawakening is taking place in certain environments that do not accept the propaganda of the cultural superiority of the West.

I would also add that, in the West, not everything is negative, and perhaps the most vital forces of cultural resistance are found in the very heart of the Western civilization that today, from a contemporary perspective, appears to demonstrate an undeniable superiority. Modern science is an example of this, and the metamorphosis that contemporary science is currently going through is another great reason for hope.

The cultural resistance must also be realistic and not wage battle against the terms of the dominant culture. To achieve this it must strive to open up to neighboring cultures with what I call "dialogal dialogue." This is not a dialogue with the whole world, with which I may only have an indirect and mediatized dialogue, whether by satellite or in English. With my

neighbors, on the other hand, I can have another type of contact on a human scale. This is the dialogal dialogue. It is through this dialogue that we open up to the other person, with fundamental new categories of thought. When, for example, I am in India, speaking (in any given Western language) about State, democracy, matter, time, science, freedom, thought, the individual, man, or the world, I know that these categories have no value there—they are exogenous. If we are to overcome the cultural provincialism that we are prey to and help other cultures to truly become themselves we must learn other forms of language. The basic categories with which we express ourselves are not universal. We are not to blame, seeing that we do not have any other way of expressing ourselves, but all too often, whether consciously or less consciously, we tend to absolutize these categories. We say person, human being, matter, energy, world, God, democracy, State, science, time, and so on, and we come to think of them as universal concepts through which to make ourselves understood. To us they are, of course, but not to the whole world. This is the trap of monoculturalism.

Here I shall set down nine points, formulating them without too much deliberation, as if they were gifts of the Spirit.

1. Culture is not merely a form of living and seeing the world and life, but it opens us up to a new reality, a new universe. Every culture lives and creates its own universe. If, for example, I choose not to believe that Andromeda is millions of light-years away, this does not mean that I am an aberrant or ignorant being; I am simply not absolutizing the time or space of contemporary astronomy—which makes gigantic extrapolations when it leaves the solar system.

2. Culture is not an object, not even an object of thought, and, therefore, cannot be manipulated through mere concepts. Neither is it subject to our will—it is all-absorbing myth. Sociology knows that cultural laws are of another order.

3. The essence of the much-discussed colonialism and, in a certain sense, of imperialism also (which I do not go into here) is precisely the myth of the monoculture—the belief that there exist universal values because we see them from within one single culture regarded as the universal model. I imagine that when, in the past (five hundred years ago, or perhaps only fifty), people spoke of “one God, one homeland, one king” or *one* religion, *one* civilization, *one* truth, it was not with any bad intention; they believed it, convinced that it was the only solution. Today we are secularized and proclaim one democracy, one science, one universal government, one world bank, or one single language so that everyone in the world can understand each other. Belief in monoculturalism is the essence of colonialism.

4. Interculturality cannot be reduced to secondary forms and, consequently, to folklore, to marginal secondary forms in the sphere I define as “technocracy,” in which we are today.

5. By acting from within one single culture it is not possible to create interculturality, which means that I cannot move from where I am, either individually, as a group, or as a culture. No “just us” mentality—just Catholics, just activists, just Americans, or just people of goodwill—no reality, nor men alone without the plants and animals, without Gods, can solve the human problem. This means that I essentially need the presence of my neighbor, with all his anxiety, trouble, and sorrow, his difficulties, his comradeship, love, help, and collaboration. In short, there can be no such thing as an intercultural monologue. There must, therefore, be a two-way dialogue in two languages.

6. Interculturality cannot even be approached from all cultures. There is no intercultural language. From the moment I begin to speak I am already dependent on a given culture. Interculturality is only possible when two cultures open up to each other—although this mutual opening up does not necessarily have to be equal. If I speak as a Christian or a Marxist

I use a language that a Buddhist or a Hindu cannot hear, because they would think I am schizophrenic. They are two different things. Every culture has its own language and its own yardsticks. Every culture secretes, so to speak, its own criteria of truth.

7. Today we have common problems but not common solutions. We cannot deny that the very predominance of the dominant culture is responsible for the problems of famine, war, and violence that characterize this culture, but there are no common solutions.

8. Other cultures are generally blinded by their admiration for or rejection of the dominant culture, and therefore it is necessary to overcome both this acritical admiration and this perhaps somewhat adolescent repulsion or rebellion. Maturity, nobility of soul, and spiritual gifts are required of all of us. As Chinese wisdom says, "When a gong is built well, beat it in any way, hit it as you will, resonate a blow where and how you wish, its answer will always be harmonious and beautiful": it will always answer you well.

9. The alternatives are external and internal enclaves that are necessary but not sufficient. By this I mean that we must overcome one of the obstacles that often troubles us—the conviction that there is only one alternative. My reply is twofold: first, there is no such thing as only one alternative, and even if there was, I am sure that my suggestion would be worse than what is already being applied. That which currently exists, in fact, has developed, in spite of everything, over a long period of time and with the contribution of many. Whatever I might suggest, I doubt it would be the final solution; it might be a little more just, but it would not last long. A number of alternatives exist—and again we are back to pluralism. There is not one alternative that could replace, let's say, today's democracy, today's capitalism, the systems of today, science, and technology. There are, however, many possible alternatives. Our task is to find them and put them into action.

INJUSTICE IN THE WORLD DOES NOT LEAVE US INDIFFERENT

The World Situation Seen from a Western Perspective

We are not insensitive to injustice in the world.¹

It must be said, first of all, that the attitude shared by many is one of great sensitivity to existing injustice.

Both on a personal and a collective level, we Westerners have an advantage and a handicap. On a personal level we have the advantage of still being able to hope. Even though it is clear that the world is going wrong and that many people are dying of hunger, we are able to hope because "we are not suffering or starving." We have the mentality of the victorious. Goodwill allows us to understand the reality of things in all its complexity, without having to be part of the vast majority of people who live badly. And this is our handicap. We cannot represent this vast majority that is unable to hope—those who are starving, the twelve hundred people who lose their lives daily because of local wars (60 percent civilians, 40 percent soldiers), the children who have no hope of reaching adulthood.

To be sensitive is to feel we must find "someone" who can give "something" to the vast majority of those who cannot hope. The religious factor consists fundamentally in this.

In such a world as ours, if we were to take a hundred as the number of families making up the "global village," we would see that ninety of them do not speak English and sixty-five cannot even read or write. More than eighty have no members who have ever ridden on an airplane, and seventy have no running water in their home; sixty families occupy 10 percent of the world, while seven families own 60 percent of the land. These same seven families consume 75 percent of all the energy, and only one family has a university education.

Living conditions have deteriorated drastically in the last few generations and show no sign of improving in the immediate future. If the predictions of an increasing number of experts are confirmed, the vortex set in motion by the technological civilization will not allow our planet to live long.

Let us take, for example, Catalonia, a land that is fairly large but also fairly small (large enough to be conscious of being a nation but small enough to not represent any danger or threat on a worldwide level). The people are aware of their roots and love their traditions. This might allow us (if we have enough imagination) to begin to establish something new instead of embarking again on the old path, which, at this point in history, leads through so-called progress—progress that is dull, sterile, and completely unremarkable.

¹ Translation from Spanish of the article "La injusticia en el mundo no nos deja indiferentes," *Tiempo de hablar, tiempo de actuar* 60 (Winter 1995): 18–23; text reedited by the author. Translated by Geraldine Clarkson.

What I have just said allows me to also mention here the disadvantages we have as a community. The main one is the euphoria and elation produced in us by the new dimensions of modernity, progress, and technology—almost as if machines could give us an answer to the questions of life. The great disadvantage lies in the enormous effort we make to climb onto the last carriage of the last train—which is speeding on toward disaster.

It is necessary for us to understand that we are facing a *novum*, that is, a situation that has never occurred in the history of mankind. The issue today is not the supposed supremacy of the United States or the Soviet Union (of a few years ago), nor is it the problems of East-West or North-South. This would be intellectual shortsightedness.

The *novum* we are challenged with is the fact that there have never been so many starving people as there are today, not only in absolute but also in relative terms—and just at a time when mankind has more means than ever before of feeding everyone. If I speak in numbers it is to insist on the fact that behind every number there is a real person and not a "thing" (men are not "peanuts"). And when I speak of everyone, I am referring to the six billion people who inhabit the whole planet and not the infinitesimal minority represented by us privileged few (for example, when they say it is important to learn English in order to "be understood by the whole world" they forget that this "whole world" represents only 10 percent of mankind).

The first alternative is knowing that there is no such thing as a global alternative. There are only plural, decentralized alternatives.

One of the greatest misunderstandings of today is that of accepting the law of large numbers that extols universal values: the universal culture, the "Catholic" religion, the common language, the new world order, the global alternative, and so on. Too often we forget that there is nothing better than speaking the same language for causing misunderstanding. This deception also lurks within a word that is very fashionable today—pluralism, which uses such expressions as, "I am tolerant enough to tolerate other tolerant people." In fact, however, we are only tolerant when we begin to tolerate the intolerant. What counts, that is, is overcoming the fear of losing control—and this is precisely the meaning of a true attitude of openness in the current situation.

New Pluralistic Alternatives

Now that I have made these clarifications to help us avoid the temptation of falling into the global alternative or a "decaffeinated" pluralism, let us try to move on.

The first (and most difficult) step has a negative aspect. We must demolish an "order" that we already know has no solution. Any type of reform is anachronistic, because it prolongs the agony of the current disorder. We must not carry out this demolition with violence (in this field the system is much stronger than we are, and reacts to violence by wreaking an even more violent repression), but with an eminently theologicophilosophico-Christian method that may represent a path toward transcendence without being an escape.

On a philosophical level we must overcome monism (world power, truth for all, a single solution, etc.) and dualism (two fields, two blocks, two worlds, etc.) and open up to a Trinitarian or nondualistic vision of reality itself.

Let us look at a few examples. The Trinity is an expression that helps us to understand that God is neither one nor triune but, rather, a process that transcends all thought. Neither is Christ a God-Man in a 50/50 proportion (with all the "theological" problems that would be raised by their more profoundly and prosaically human behavior). Man even surpasses dualistic anthropology, which regards him only as sinner or redeemer, man or woman, rich or poor, rightist or leftist, and so on.

The world situation today embraces many elements of this dialectic. There is an increasing "awareness" that the real problems lie in other areas than those proclaimed by the defenders of universal values I mentioned earlier. We are reminded somewhat of the eleventh chapter of Genesis, when the aspiration of the builders of the tower of Babel for a world government was so nicely thwarted by Yahweh with the confusion of tongues. In spite of everything, the peoples of the Abrahamic tradition (Semites, Jews, Christians, Muslims—and Marxists) constantly fall into the temptation of a single global project.

The authentic Christian tradition, on the other hand, is that of the Pentecost, when each of the disciples began to speak in his language and everyone understood them in their own without the need for simultaneous translation. Instead of choosing "standard Hebrew" as the language of communication, the Holy Spirit opted for linguistic pluralism.

To be able to accept pluralism we must have the kind of trust that is not merely the fruit of a desire for such. There must be an authentic *metanoia*, a conversion, a change of mentality. Pluralism cannot exist while we harbor mistrust toward those who think differently than us.

The great challenge of today is an intellectually profound consciousness that echoes the age-old experience of mankind, takes other cultures seriously also, and in our case is inspired by the gospel and recognizes that only pluralistic solutions are real and liveable: solutions, that is, that do not aim to reduce everything to a single common denominator or to anything else that may be understood as an intelligible form. And in this lies the great deviance both from monism and dualism—which are easily understood but are not suited to reality as it is today.

In this respect, therefore, it is important to have contact with the other cultures and traditions, and also to have had other personal experiences.

I think it is good to emphasize that a profound and scientific specialization is often not necessary. What most aroused anger against Christ was the very fact that he took upon himself his message: that the most important thing is to love.

According to Indian tradition, "consciousness" is the deconditioning of the individual, a breaking free from the conditioning of things, as a path of liberation. This leads us to challenge the great dogmas of modernity, and to do so we need much more than technological ability.

One of the great dogmas of modernity is that which upholds the existence of different "centers of the world" (Paris is the center of fashion, Rome the center of religion, the United States the center of political power, and so on). We have to rediscover that the "center of reality" lies in the heart of each one of us.

Thus we will find within ourselves the *delectatio* that immunizes us against every kind of envy (against those who are richer, more beautiful, have a better car, etc.), because *delectatio* lies in the discovery that each one of us is at the center of reality.

The example of "work" may be very enlightening. In the modern Western world, work is considered to be one of the fundamental values. We forget (as I said earlier) that, etymologically speaking, the Spanish *trabajo* and the French *travail* derive from *tripalium*, which was an instrument of torture used for punishing slaves. And we forget also that the first human activity was that of Adam, as gardener of Paradise (and we all know that a gardener does not actually "work").

I would like to tell a little anecdote that well illustrates this argument, showing that the concept of mechanized labor is strictly connected to Western civilization. Once upon a time in Mexico there was a craftsman who made beautiful chairs. A North American dealer who happened to be passing by saw the possibility of a good deal. He approached the craftsman and asked him how much each chair cost. "Ten pesos, sir," replied the man.

"And if I buy six?"

"Then, sir, it would be seventy-five pesos."

The tradesman could not understand this way of calculating, because in asking a higher number of chairs from the craftsman it was logical to expect a discount. The dealer continued insisting until the craftsman, weary of arguing, explained his reasoning with these words:

"Listen, sir, if I make only one chair I enjoy my craft. But if I make six chairs all the same, who will recompense me for the boredom it causes me? This is why I ask seventy-five *pesos* instead of sixty."

Those who work in the Western world are absorbed into a production machine. And this has nothing to do with creative activity.

Another point, on which I do not intend to dwell as I have talked about it a number of times, is the temporary nature of all alternatives. What counts is the enjoyment of doing, and not thinking we already have the solution, that we are building a new world, or preparing another paradise. We must not forget that, phenomenologically speaking, the essence of paradise lies precisely in the awareness that it has been lost.

Where is all this leading us? To the fact that the challenge of the present time is not a partial challenge (referring to one aspect or another) that allows us to improve things by adopting reforms. It is a much more radical challenge, which calls into question the very essence of human life on earth.

One possible solution would be to try to recognize pluralism which, as we have said, is the discovery of the fact that I am unique, that every population is unique, and that all unifying models are artificial.

It is significant what the Gospel says about the temptation of Christ in the desert, which the church commemorates on the first Sunday of Lent. The purification of Jesus comes about through having faith in things as they are and not seeking to change them, regardless of the profound knowledge of the Scriptures that the devil uses against him. It is not a question of turning stones into bread, but of respecting them as they are. Jesus provides us with a Zen-type answer, in antithesis to the Messianic trend of the Sadducees and the Pharisees that we still come across today in our technological, political, and economic world. It is not strange that the Jews of his day wanted him dead, or that modern-day Christianity in the West is so unevangelical.

Coming back to the title of this chapter, "Injustice in the World Does Not Leave Us Indifferent," I believe this is the response of Christian sensitivity to a world, our own, that is corroded with injustice and in which we find ourselves in a privileged position. We can justify this situation only if we are being concerned with it, each as he sees fit, prompted by a vision that is pluralistic, decentralized, and respectful of things as they are, striving to dedicate our lives to justice.

What I must do, on one hand, is seek to make that image of reality that is myself, and not my egoism, reflect perfectly, and on the other hand, have confidence in others and in their quest for the sense of their own lives. The center of the universe passes through my country, or through me, when its center, or mine, reflects the entire Universe. The center, therefore, will be everywhere. Man will have found his own center when he discovers transcendence in its immanence. Thus freed from egoism, we will then be able to fearlessly undertake not the conquest of the world, but its redemption. This is what passion for justice means.

A NEW SOCIETY FOR A NEW MILLENNIUM*

The genuine intrareligious dialogue is not an exercise in the clouds or merely a discussion among experts. Religion has to do with the earth as much as with heaven. The artificial slogan about the "Third Millennium" is a good pretext to reflect on the religious contribution to a just society. The situation of the world at large confirms that *we are going in the wrong direction*. What follows are some reflections on that ultimate question. Is this not a religious concern?

In our times, the crisis of religion cannot be overcome by one single religion, and certainly not by one single culture. *The task is today urgently cross-cultural, that is, interreligious*, because of the inextricable link between culture and religion.

Paraphrasing Marx I would say that it is not solely a question of how to change the world or to go to heaven, but also how to love the world without ceasing to struggle to realize heaven, even on earth—without specifying now the meaning of the symbols of heaven and earth. It is a question of recovering the integral meaning of human life—and thus without severing it from the entire reality.

It is this awareness that makes us very sensitive to the state of the world today and constantly brings our reflections to the vital problems of our contemporary human predicament.

A List of Priorities¹

There is an emerging consensus that the world needs radical measures to prevent falling into the abyss it is itself digging. But when it comes to a new vision we seem to lack imagination, to say the least, and are afraid of being branded as Utopians. I am conscious of the utopian character of this chapter, and I do not wish to elaborate here on the intermediary steps or the strategies needed to achieve the goal. This is a communitarian task. Blueprints are out of place. I only underline that the seriousness of the hour demands the radicality of the points. Many of them overlap each other, and some of them are of a more concrete character than others. Some are hierarchically related, and all are mutually linked so that the change in one point effects the change in the others. Aristotle spoke of "political prudence," and I appeal to it for the implementation of the points. This is only a sort of memorandum. It goes without saying that each of these points is complex and problematic, that they have all been largely studied and should not be oversimplified. But the urgency of the situation requires decisions in one direction, without being paralyzed because the experts tell us that the issues

* Reflections at the "Philosophy and the Future of Mankind" seminar, Cambridge, UK, August 6–11, 1989.

¹ It includes also "A Nonary of Priorities," in J. Ogilvy, ed., *Revisioning Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992).

are difficult and complicated while, in the meantime, we leave the world to the powers that be. All the following points must be relativized and yet cannot be ignored.

Demonetization of Culture

Christians, to begin with, like to quote the revolutionary statement by Jesus that says that we cannot serve God and Mammon. Vedantis are fond of saying that the riches of this world are despicable. Buddhist monks should beg for their food and be clothed in patched robes. And so many other religions voice similar ideas. But when it comes to practical life, we all seem to be less radical. A Franciscan friar should not ride a horse, but he can drive a car, as this is not forbidden in the rule.

Money has an important role to play in human interactions, but it has become a *totalitarian tyrant* in modern Westernized culture, East and West. It has penetrated all spheres of human action: food, health, education, well-being, art, marriage, and so on, and all seem to depend on money. As in geometry forms are abstracted from physical perceptions and elaborated and eventually the laws of those abstracted forms are applied again to physical realities, so money abstracts from human activities, "abstracts" (extracts) money from them, and eventually makes those very activities dependent on money. The *real* world is not made of monetizable commodities, just as physical entities are not made of geometrical figures, fractals notwithstanding. And this is not only the case with spiritual values, but also material realities. To have to pay for water, food—and soon air—is a sign of a sick culture.

The monetization of all cultural values is the natural outcome of the quantification of the human outlook. Money makes it possible to place a quantitative tag on any human activity and measure that activity by its monetary coefficient. Nature is written in mathematical figures, we were told by Galileo, although now Modern Science begins to surmise that physical entities may not be measurable, not only because of a factual (Heisenbergian) impossibility, but also of the theoretical incommensurability of any *real* things—unless we postulate gratuitously that reality is intelligible. In fact, reality is incommensurable to any intellect. Reality is real and not merely ideal. Once again, intellectualism is lurking behind the Western psyche. The dictatorship of money is a result of a narrow "scientific" worldwide.

Dismantling the Construction of the Tower of Babel

One of the most powerful symptoms of our times is the unbridled power of the world market in the world economy where all Gods are monetizable commodities on an abstract world scale. This global homogenization centralizes the control of all goods in fewer and fewer agencies. In short, the centripetal tendency of our times is the fruit of a mechanistic and quantitative conception of cultural values; technocratic civilization again awakens the temptation of a World Empire. Technocentrism is the insidious temptation.

There is a paradox here. The material planet Earth may not be the center of the universe, just as the astronomic sun may not be the center of the Milky Way. Ethnocentrism may be obsolete, and anthropocentrism a weak substitute for a lost theocentrism (which contradicts itself the moment it is interpreted by Man). Technocentrism, on the other hand, claims to be neutral (privileging neither one race nor one culture) and objective (the center being neither Man nor God). This is not true; its power lies in the fact that Man needs a center, a point of reference, a place of convergence. God has become an object of private belief. He has no cosmic role to play, and possible alternatives of other worldviews seem to be on the wane or nonexistent.

The difficulty lies in the geometrical interpretation of the metaphor projected onto the mechanistic worldview. None of the things mentioned nor a purely transcendent God can be the center of the universe. And yet, in a more holistic vision, the center of the universe lies in every being that constitutes precisely the *uni-versum*, as we should know since Anaxagoras, the *Upanisad*, and the Middle Ages. "God is that infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference nowhere," says the famous hermetic dictum that is quoted by many sages in the West. Losing this vision of the center of reality passing through our self (because the Divine is immanent as much as transcendent), we are condemned, more irresistibly than water precipitates down the torrents of the mountains, to fall into the precipices of fashion, power, profit, and ultimately despair. We are reduced then to atoms striving for survival at the cost of others. If life has a meaning only for the victors, only for those who "make it," we create an artificial hell for all the others, and no amount of "liberation," "redemption," or "reincarnation" can rescue them from it. The meaning of life for a Merina individual cannot be to become the head of the corporation over three hundred other employees. For the people of Madagascar the meaning of life cannot be found by coveting the "model" of a rich and powerful United States.

Cultural pluralism means, among other things, that each culture has its own center—elusive, mobile, and contingent as it may and should be. Without the self-confidence that the center of reality is in every one of us, *homo sapiens* is reduced to *animal imitans*—to an aping animal.

We are the center of the universe, because as a microcosm we reflect the whole, but we are not the circumferences of reality. We can only be a center when we have no dimension of our own and are open to an ever greater circumference. The center becomes selfish and isolated, and ultimately stifles as soon as it draws a circumference upon itself. This is the reason for the paradox that in order to decentralize culture we need more and more centered individuals and self-confident human societies. A self-reliant economy, for instance, means not self-sufficiency, but an equitable inter-independent net of markets. *Inter-independence* is not unilateral or unbalanced dependence. Interdependence without inter-independence is just dependence of the weaker on the powerful. The bioregions, as a relatively complete ecosystem, may offer here an appropriate paradigm.

Overcoming the Nation-States Ideology

The alternative is not to fall back into absolute feudalisms of "primitive" tribalism. The alternative has to be elaborated by fostering in an organic way the healthy tendency, noticeable everywhere, of increasing *ontonomies* and working out a network of multilateral but not necessarily universal relationships that allow for a fruitful coexistence. I am proposing neither a single gigantic nation-state nor a proliferation of monadic and Lilliputian nation-states. "State" does not necessarily mean either "people" or "nation."

It is not a question of shifting the notion of sovereignty from nation-states to people or even cultures. To overcome state nationalism does not mean to transpose the same ideology of self-sovereignty and absolute freedom to bigger units or even to the entire human race. There are no sovereign values on earth. The ancients believed in a cosmic order, *ordo, rta, tao, dharma, kosmos*, or an upholder of it, God. Without a homeomorphic equivalent to these symbols the delicate balance between freedom and cohesion (let alone spontaneity and coercion) is not possible. The problem is not merely political. It is philosophical and theological. Two given societies can be *ontonomically* related only if there is a third element coordinating them, only if they form part of a whole that is more than its "parts" but that requires the well-being of the "parts" in order to be a harmonious whole.

The Empire was a myth with a unifying force. Its dismemberment produced the nation-states. The Empire could be sovereign because it was allegedly founded on a divine principle superior to it. Not so the nation-states, but they retained the title (even against etymology—there cannot be multiple “supremes”). The ideology of Empire has collapsed and so has that of the absolute sovereignty of partial units. A new myth is required.

Reducing Modern Science to Its Proper Limits

The very grandeur of Modern Science is accountable for its unbounded success well beyond its proper boundaries. It has modified modern ways of thinking in areas far removed from the domain of scientific disciplines. It has influenced ways of living in almost all corners of the world.

This reduction to its proper limits cannot be imposed from without. The modern scientific ideology is so widespread as to render ineffective any kind of heteronomous impositions of morality. It is not by legislation and artificial boundaries, for instance, that we will bridle the intrinsic expansionist force of genetic engineering. It has to be through the discovery of the very *ontonomic* order of reality. This discovery must be the fruit of an insight into the meaning of human life and the nature of reality.

The limits of Modern Science are both epistemological and ontological, besides being objective and subjective. In spite of its sacred name of *scientia*, Modern Science is not identifiable with it. It is not *gnōsis, jñāna*, nor *hochma chi, sapientia*. It has no intrinsic saving power. Not all epistemology is “scientific,” and not all cognition is measurable. Not all knowledge is covered by “Science.” Modern Science cannot be equated with knowledge about the world or insight into the nature of reality. Not all ontology is “scientific.” Not even all being can necessarily be reduced to the *logos*. Not all is object, so science, and certainly the scientist as subject, cannot be included in it.

Correcting Technocracy with Art

The direct result of modern techno-science is the technocratic complex of modern society. The old theocracies, monarchies, oligarchies, aristocracies, anarchies, and even democracies have given way today to modern technocracy. The *kratos*, the power, is not bestowed on God, or on a special group of people, or left apparently vacant; it is bestowed on modern technology. Modern technology, like Modern Science, has borrowed a traditional word and invested it with a new meaning. “Science” is not *scientia, jñāna*, we said, nor is modern technology synonymous with *technē*, traditional techniques, namely, arts, crafts, machines of the first degree, arrangements of material artifacts without artificially induced accelerations. There is the spirit—as inspiration—behind every *technē*. The Indic *silpasastra* offers here a model, and not only for India. The craftsman has to be inspired. Modern technology has substituted the *pneuma* with the *logos* in the sense of *ratio*. The “scientist” needs information and “know-how,” the artist needs inspiration and “know-what.”

Today the *kratos*, power, does not rest on the politicians. They have to obey the mega-machines of the technocratic System. The power does not even lie with the experts. They need capital and political blessings, and can only work in a unilateral direction: increase of power, profit, acceleration, miniaturization, efficiency, and so on.

Unless we play demagogically with words, the *démōs*, the people, will only have *kratos*, power, if they are not just entitled, but also able, to exert it. Technocracy makes it impossible for the people to steer their own destiny. The mega-machine commands, and its highly specialized experts with many years of training can operate it but not steer it toward other

directions and uses other than those allowed by the inner mechanisms of the technocratic system. Armamentism, inflation, growth of the megalopolis, agriculture converted into agribusiness, and so on are just some examples of the fatal flaws of the System.

The people can only recover their power if they can rule their own destiny. Technocracy does not allow it. It would require a highly specialized know-how that is impossible for the people to master. Technocracy makes children out of adults. The people cannot even know and thus decide what is good for them. "The Computer surely knows"! "We have only to obey." Some feel that capitalism is incompatible with democracy. Technocracy is certainly contradictory to democracy. Protagoras had already seen it. While for all the other arts and crafts we can rely on qualified experts, the political art, the *politikē technē*, cannot be delegated to other competent experts (Plato, *Protagoras* 322bff). It concerns and belongs to all of us. A new anthropology is required here.

The word "art" needs an explanation, since we are so accustomed to take this word for entertainment, folklore, and a somewhat marginal activity. Art is that which art-iculates life and brings it all together through the "artistic" creation of the person. The meaning of life is to make a work of art of each of us. For this artistic creation we need the collaboration of the entire universe, from the Divine to Matter and our fellow beings. Each one of us should be able to express his- or herself, to create his- or herself in positive symbiosis with the rest of reality. Beauty and love are paramount in most human traditions: the first attribute of God, as so many religions affirm.

Overcoming Democracy by Experiencing a New Kosmology

The *dēmos* can have *kratos*, power, only if people are more than the sum total of basically isolated individuals. Man is a person, a knot in a net of relationships . . . and not an autonomous individual. Man is an *ontonomous* being. We need a new anthropology. But a new anthropology requires a new notion of the cosmos. "Concept" is an inadequate word, and for this reason I spell the word with a *k*, transliterating from the original *kosmos*, which has the stupendous connotations of world, order, and ornament. Kosmology then connotes not a new "scientific" concept of the universe (cosmology), but the experience of how the cosmos manifests itself to us, our sense of the cosmos, our perceptions of reality.

The cosmos we live in is not necessarily the astronomic, or the geological, or even the geographic or historiographic universe. Each culture has another sense of the cosmos and lives in another cosmos. The main cause of our present-day crisis is to be found in the latent conflict of cosmologies in and around us—in us because our contemporary experience of reality is ill at ease in the cosmos of a scientific vision of the world; around us because the mixing of people of different worldviews cannot be peacefully handled if we compare only different texts and ignore the underlying (kosmological) contexts.

There are many voices today singing new tunes and mixing with the old, but we do not have (yet) a new sense of the real. We are troubled by miracles, feelings and extrasensory perceptions (to give some examples), because they are foreign and uncomfortable phenomena in the overall prevalent "scientific" cosmology, but we lack, even within each culture, a convincing vision of reality. Our myths are collapsing and we do not have new ones.

We know, moreover, enough sociology, psychology, and political science to ignore the fact that democracy offers an effective political technique but not a strong theory. We know not only that people are manipulable but also that the *dēmos* as the highest instance only works within a given and accepted *mythos*, which makes certain beliefs possible to a particular

people. The true *dēmos*, like the ancient *polis*, all need their temples, their Gods, their opening up to a super-democratic power. We can only avoid tyranny if a new cosmology emerges. The political situations in Africa and Latin America should be sufficient examples.

Recovering Animism

Without quarrelling about words, I understand by animism the experience of life as coextensive with nature. Every natural being is a living cell, part of a whole, and mirroring the whole at the same time. "Not only animals and plants are alive, also mountains and water, since they give life to the creatures born from them," Marsilio Ficino wrote in 1476, echoing an almost universal tradition (*De amore VI.3*).

Life is the time of being, the ancients said (*zōē chronos tou einai*). Anything temporal is alive by the very fact of *being* temporal. Time is not only and not even mainly a quantitative or "scientific" parameter; it is the very life of the universe. Individual existence is such because it stands in symbiosis with the Tree of life, with the Being of beings.

The meaning of human life is, therefore, to share as fully as possible in the Life of the Universe. Christ came, says John the Evangelist, repeating Jesus's words, so that we may have Life and Life abundantly. Not all life is the same, to be sure, nor are our nations the same: the modern Gaia hypothesis is not the *anima mundi* of the neo-Platonics, the *jivātmān* Jains, Tylor's African animism, or Mach's philosophical vitalism.

Two features should be mentioned here. Animism here stands for an overcoming of all mechanistic and rationalistic worldviews. There is a principle of freedom, of life in everything—as contemporary scientists seem to begin to surmise.

Animism stands, further, for the relatedness of all reality according to an order or harmony that is itself relatedness. To say all is alive is not to affirm that all is of the same stuff or all alike. It affirms the moving, free, precisely living relationship of every brim of reality. It connotes, further, that death is a real possibility—for the individual.

Peace with the Earth

No ecological renewal of the world will ever succeed until and unless we redeem "ecology" from being either a "hard" science or a sentimental movement. The word *ecosophy* stands for this change. Ecosophy considers the Earth as belonging to our Body, and the body as belonging to our self. This would be an aberration if the "belonging" were to be understood as private and individual property. Neither the Earth nor the Body nor the Self belongs to my (psychological) *ego*. We are sharers in the Word, as the Vedas say and the Gospel echoes—equating the Word with Divine Life, identifying Life with Light, and Light with God. The ecosophical problem is strictly theological—and, vice versa, theology cannot ignore the Earth. The figure of Ramanuja could be inspirational for the cosmos as the Body of God.

The Jewish tradition tells of the Covenant of Noah. A covenant with the Earth is one of our most *urgent* and important tasks. The ecosophical movement is not a new technological way of exploiting the Earth more rationally and more lastingly. It entails a relationship with the Earth as a whole. The Earth is not an object either of knowledge or of desire. The Earth is part of ourselves—of our Self.

Movements are under way to swear a human Covenant with the Earth. It is a covenant of fidelity toward ourselves. It is a question of sensitivity. This has led me to describe the splitting of the atom (for whatever good intentions) as a cosmic abortion. We kill and extract from the very womb of matter the extra energy units that our greed needs, because we have

disrupted the rhythms of Nature. We not only torture animals and Men, if we include politics. We torture Matter as well.

Peace does not mean an idyllic or idealistic view of total passivity or a static idea of Life, as if positive and negative metabolisms were not required. The animal does not "kill" but eats and occasionally fights. Man does not exploit the Earth when following Nature. The chain of being or the wheel of existence is a living thing. There is exchange, there is karma, there is death. But there is also resurrection.

Peace with the Earth excludes victory over the Earth, submission or exploitation of the Earth to *our* exclusive needs. It requires collaboration, *synergy*, a new awareness.

Uncovering the Divine Dimension

Atheism, I submit, is another form of theism, although a negative one (antitheism). Polytheism as well as monotheisms and deisms belong to an already decaying cosmology. The old controversies about reason and faith, believers and unbelievers are rapidly becoming obsolete. The divine Mystery is not pigeonholed in neat, rational categories. Pure transcendence is a contradiction in terms. It destroys itself the moment it is not only formulated but simply thought. Thought becomes then the bridge to transcendence, and by this very fact transcendence is denied. Pure immanence, on the other hand, becomes unnecessary. If the divine were purely immanent it would be identical with ourselves, and thus redundant—or pure monism.

To introduce a discourse on the Divine implies accepting a "factor" irreducible and yet related to ourselves: a "factor" "above" all our faculties (of loving, willing, knowing), and at the same time "in" all of them. All too often, "God" has been envisaged as an *x* somewhat beyond the actual grasp of our faculties. This *x* recedes in the same measure that our knowledge advances, or our feelings deepen, or our will increases. This God is strategically receding each time "Science" advances. No wonder most perceptive thinkers see this battle lost in advance. To cover our ignorance we do not need the Divine any longer. Pure potentiality would do.

The divine dimension is more than a plus in the aesthetic or intelligible *status quo*. It is "more" than transcendence or immanence. The way to experience the Divine can be a path of the *plus* or of the *minus* (transcending or descending), fullness or emptiness, but in both cases the way is not the goal and yet the goal is nowhere behind or beyond the way; the divine dimension is a third dimension irreducible to but not independent of the other two and thus not an "object" of the sense or the intellect, that is, matter and consciousness. And yet the divine is utter meaninglessness without both. There is a third dimension of freedom and infinitude that impregnates both matter and spirit, the sense and the intellect, the *aesthesia* and the *noēsis*—open to what the Greek tradition called *ta mystika*. We would call it also the "space" (*ākāśa*) in which we move and sense and think, in which we live and are.

Anthropomorphism is inadequate, and so is cosmomorphism, when speaking about the Divine. And yet it is that *plus* and/or *minus* concerning both the experience of Man and Cosmos that opens up the very experience not of "something Else" but of the other third dimension of the Trinitarian Whole. Reality is of cosmotheandric nature. The relation between the three dimensions is nondualistic, Advaitic, Trinitarian.

It is here, at this level, where we should situate the most upsetting and terrifying problem that no charter should eschew: the problem of evil.

There is disorder, suffering, hatred in this world and on all levels. Blindness toward it or pure passivity would not do. Fighting against it on the same level or with the same weapons only doubles the evil. Evil is—by definition—inexplicable. To explain it would be to explain

it away. It is certainly a "privation" but also a privation of intelligibility. Evil obliges us to experience our contingency, our incapacity to have a neat and coherent picture of reality. It opens us to the abyss of the Divine from the other side, as it were. It cures us of any superficiality and sense of self-sufficiency. It spurns us into our personal leap in Life and does not cover the risk. It is part of the Mystery.

As for *how*, we have already said that there is no blueprint, no model to imitate, no projected *telos* to realize. If freedom is more (not less) than just the power of choice, it is the setting forth of the *creatio continua* (of the Christian Scholastics), the sharing in the momentariness (*ksanikarva*) of the real (of the Buddhists), the being with *Brahman* (of Vedantism). This is our dignity and our responsibility.

Part 2

PEACE AND CULTURAL DISARMAMENT*

*Jayam veram pasavati dukkham seti parājito
upasanto sukhā hitvā jayaparajāyam*

*Conquering, we engender hatred; conquered, we suffer.
With serenity and gladness we live if victory and defeat are overcome.*

Dhammapāda XV.5 (201)

Si vis pacem para te ipsum

If you want peace, prepare yourself.¹

*Peregrinantibus, qui in ipso vitae itinere
Vitam inveniunt, et sic liberi pacem colunt.*

*To the pilgrims who, along the very journey to life,
find Life, and, thus free, foster peace.*

* Original edition: *Paz y desarme cultural* (Santander: Sal Terrae, 1983; rev. ed. Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 2002); *Cultural Disarmament: The Way to Peace* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995).

¹ Obviously paraphrasing the Latin saying: *Si vis pacem, para bellum* [If you want peace, prepare for war]. [Ed. note.]

PREFACE

... therefore banished him from the Garden of Eden.

Gen 3:23

This study has been constructed in a three-step process. The first step has been a long one and goes back many years; it consists in my many courses and seminars on peace at the University of California, together with talks and meetings on the same subject. In a second step—a short, intense one—I tried to reduce the number of concepts and write down a more compact text. In the third step, longer than the second but no less intense, I have broadened and completed the text, and added the notes and bibliography—not in any spirit of ostentation, but either to clarify the text further or to show that we are not alone in our endeavor.

In an attempt to formulate a Latin epigraph for this study, I revisit the Persian poet's distich:

*Rahraūn rākhastagi-ye-nāh nist
ishq ham rāh ast-u-ham khud-manzil ast¹*

*Never do they tire who pursue this footway,
for it is at once the destination and the route.*

Peace seems to be one of the goals that the great souls existing in the world have always set for themselves. Their sensitivity causes them grief when they see everywhere violence, and especially hatred. This is where the universal primacy of love comes from. Pico della Mirandola speaks of the "discord" that reigns within us, defining it as worse than a civil war. And elsewhere he exclaims,

We will rejoice in the longed-for peace, the most holy peace, the indissoluble bond, the harmonious friendship, in which all souls, in one mind (a mind that is above all minds), are not only in agreement but, indeed, in a certain ineffable way, inwardly become one. This is the friendship that the Pythagoreans call the end of all philosophy, that peace which God makes in his heavens, which the angels who came down to earth announced to men of good will. . . . Let us desire this peace for our friends, for our times.

Just as war has ceased to be a ritual and has lost all reason for being (*[bellum] alienum a ratione*, as Pope John XXIII defines it in the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* of 1963), so peace is no longer a luxury but has become an essential condition for the fullness of human life, the preservation of the species, and the survival of the planet itself.

¹ Quoted in M. A. K. Azad in his Introduction to *History of Philosophy, Eastern and Western*, vol. 1 (London: Allen & Unwin, 1952), 28.

This peace, however, is not simply spiritual tranquility or the absence of war; it is something that transcends all dichotomy and penetrates all spheres of life. Peace is neither exclusively individual nor merely collective; it is both a political hypothesis and a religious value, both natural and cultural.

In Man's current situation, in which the technocratic culture is infiltrating even the most remote corners of the Earth, it is unrealistic to speak of peace without putting into effect the cultural disarmament of the dominant civilization.

This disarmament, however, cannot be enforced by any royal decree, much less by any purely technical initiative: it is an entirely human task. It does not represent a victory over modernity, since, as the *Mahābhārata* warns us, "defeat is inherent in victory."

The central theme of the book, in addition, of course, to the many other self-supporting statements of varying importance, is suggested by its own title. It is unrealistic, in fact, to strive for peace if we do not work toward disarming the war culture in which we live, and which we will continue to follow if we fail to acknowledge this fact. For there to be peace on earth we must endeavor to disarm the dominant culture; we must overcome the philosophies (and theologies) of domination that reign in our day. It is precisely these ideological systems that justify and support political, commercial, and economic practices, and also the philosophy that prevails today in what is known as the "First World."

The discussion here is not about whether the master has a heart or the wretch is a fraud. Mine is a cultural discourse; it does not question the right to ownership, but the very concept of person (which is not synonymous with individual) and home (which is not synonymous with garage or building). Based on these prerequisites this culture must be disarmed by dismantling the power that the machine and the legal apparatus exert on the person.

Let us have a look at another extreme example. If we continue along this path, very soon drinking water will become a commodity, and those who cannot pay for it will be condemned to die of thirst. For many cultures a house is as natural as water. Both are part of a human being's basic needs. Having the right of ownership over someone else's home is the same as having the right of ownership over their body—which is the principle of institutional slavery. We have not made much progress, even though we have abolished the *ius primae noctis* and serfdom.

Let us now look at an example of cultural disarmament. It is not a question of ethics, of contenting ourselves with a behavioral ethic for the sake of adapting to the status quo: be patient, be lenient with lawbreakers (as in the case of slavery), build schools for the children, do not abuse young slave girls, and so on. It is about cultural disarmament.

Clearly, if a house, as human refuge, is an inalienable right of the person, it follows that human society will be made up of homeowners, and the concept of "making a home" will have meaning. No other cosmovision is needed. However, it is not a matter of entertaining a romantic vision of primitive life, or looking nostalgically back at the past. It is a question of realizing that the dominant culture has no future and leaves no room for hope. Disarming it, however, does not mean declaring war on it and seeking to destroy it with violence. Disarming it means making it aware of its healthier—and more traditional—principles so that it can regain confidence in itself (rather than in machines). And having self-confidence means being strong and not being afraid to disarm / deprive oneself of a power that is alien and incidental. Blessed are those who are not afraid, because theirs is the kingdom of peace.

"All men desire to know."² If this "desire" is interpreted as an attraction to an (external) object that triggers the anxiety to know, then we have a glimpse of the origin of Western pragmatism: knowledge in view to an end. And the end is what is useful: utilitarianism.

² Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I.

A more "Oriental" interpretation would be the opposite: knowledge is offered to all men. Knowing is the force of Reality that is not closed in on itself. Knowledge is not the result of desire or the (epistemic) prey of the hunter's epistemology, but the fruit that is offered to an open mind and a pure heart. Cultural disarmament involves overcoming desire as the motor (motivator) of the human being. After all, an animal is not motivated by desire for its prey but by hunger—and for this reason it does not hunt more than it needs.

Rather than offering recipes for cultural disarmament, this book focuses on studying its characteristics and describing its conditions.

* * *

Fifteen years or so after the first edition of this book was published, I reformulated its contents, adding new reflections. Unfortunately, the events of recent years confirm the growing trends highlighted in the first edition.

"To great evils, great remedies," says folk wisdom. The story of Man is not written anywhere. Not in the past, since all that has been written about it are just testimonies that have been finely filtered through the sieves of power, information, and fate. The true story of Man is more profound and more mysterious. Much less is it written in the future, though prophets and intellectuals may predict certain periods. The story of Man lies in the hands of mankind itself, however much it may be supported by forces and ideals that Man himself does not control. "God left the world to the disputes of men," says a text of the Bible in the Latin version.³ While there is no doubt that the destinies of history have almost always been controlled by the small minorities of the bravest, the most intelligent, or the least scrupulous, whenever popular protest has arisen in response to exceeding the limits of what can generally be manipulated with impunity, mankind takes its destiny into its own hands—though not always for its own good. This is what seems to be happening today. We are exhausting the internal resources of the technocratic civilization.

What generally happens is that the price to pay for lasting and stable peace is the sacrifice (in a historico-religious sense) of our selfishness, which does not come easily as long as we can find "scapegoats" to unload our responsibilities on—the rich, the exploiters, the delinquents, the terrorists, the violent, the indolent, the Muslims, the Christians, the antidemocrats, and so on. The present-day remedy for the survival of humanity, however, cannot be found in warm poultices or injections of "moralina": it demands the radical change that this book speaks about, that is, the change from a culture of war to a culture of peace. A change that I began to propose almost half a century ago.

This change from a culture of war (cultivated by nobility, chivalry, monarchy, trade, and even democracy, not forgetting "reasoning reason") to a culture of peace requires a "great remedy," a transformation in civilization that alone can bring about a change in the very self-understanding of Man. Without this, revolutions are violent and often counterproductive. This new awareness of what we really are brings with it a change that is both cosmological and theological; elsewhere I have called it "cosmotheandric."

This is the challenge of our time, the *kairos* of our historical moment. The contents of this book aim to be a contribution to this *metanoia*.

Tavertet
In adventu pacis 1992/2003

³ Sir 3:2.

INTRODUCTION

Jan Smuts said, "When I look at history I am a pessimist, but when I look at prehistory I am an optimist." Only among human beings does fighting upset the existing balances. Only the human animal massacres those of its own species and others. Only Man unleashes wars. And yet, as is inherent in this quote by Smuts, not all human experience has been disturbed by institutional violence. If we wish to talk about peace and violence we must take into consideration the last six thousand years of human experience, or else we risk having a narrow vision.

When we attempt to focus on identifying the roots of violence, however, it does not appear to be simply something that went wrong along the way, but rather something that was wrong from the start. There are three philosophical schemas or metaphysical hypotheses that explain the origin of violence and war: those of monism, dualism, and the *Advaita*. The most profound way to go back in time is to look within ourselves.

1. From a monistic viewpoint, Man is basically good. He descends from God, and in the end the goodness of God will prevail—if not in this world, then in the next. This perspective represents an innate transcendental optimism. In all the monistic schemas there is some kind of Fall by which evil is released. What we must do, therefore, is rise from this fall, either by ourselves (as in Buddhism), or with the help of others (as in Marxism), or else with the help of a higher Being (as in the Abrahamic monotheisms). Whether we interpret this Fall historically, anthropologically, or socially, all these possibilities are part of the same metaphysical option.

2. The second hypothesis may be identified as dualism. Academics have tended to criticize this interpretation of reality, but in recent times dualism has gradually gained more credibility. This view does not minimize the power of evil, but places it on the same level as good. Both participate in a cosmic drama in which our fates are decided. Good might not triumph, and darkness may succeed in reigning supreme. Dualism polarizes and urges the spirit to commitment and decisiveness.

3. The third hypothesis may be defined as a-dualism or *Advaita*. From this viewpoint, good and evil are not placed in a dialectical situation (either one or the other). Reality, ultimately, does not consist of being or non-being. Good is endowed with self-transparency and intelligibility; Evil does not have these qualities and represents the repression of all potential. Good that loses its transparency no longer appears as good; Evil that becomes intelligible ceases to be evil. A deeply rooted ambivalence is inherent in the very existence of things. This third option is not based on mechanical or technical solutions. The scientific methods of modern times preclude this perspective.

In all three options, nevertheless, there seems to be something resembling a Fall. Man and creation are endowed with an innate goodness, but somewhere along the way Man has made a mistake. What is this mistake? Where did we go wrong?

Many of the traditional religions identify the Fall as a historical event, in the most profound sense of History as originating from a cosmogonic event. The mistake was made at the beginning, by the original Man, by our ancestors. Other interpretations present the Fall as an anthropological event. Once again, we may define three orientations.

1. That which might be called the Gnostic attitude maintains that knowledge contaminates the human project—something like photographic film that deteriorates when it is exposed to the light. Once we eat of the fruit of good and evil we lose pure awareness, spontaneity dissolves, and we realize we are naked and have to cover ourselves.

2. A second approach could be that summed up by Rousseau. Man is good, but society makes him bad. The human being is receptive and malleable. The external environment can alter his nature. If Man renounced the artificial world of the city and returned to a more natural way of life, his original goodness would shine forth again.

3. A third group of anthropological arguments could be defined as scientific in nature, as they are based on observation and experimentation. Let us attempt to examine the theories that are most common today.

A very interesting analysis is that elaborated by René Girard, who explains it in his book *Violence and the Sacred*.¹ According to Girard, the source of violence lies in the very functioning of the human psyche. He identifies a triangular structure formed by a desiring subject, the desired object, and a model through which these interact with each other. The model acts as a sort of "scapegoat mechanism" that transforms the object during the process. Referring to examples taken from literature and anthropology, Girard sees the scapegoat as a victim and as a savior. In both cases, the scapegoat intervenes to restore the order of the world. The object of desire is concealed within its desirability, which takes possession of the subject and alters the perception of the desired object. According to Girard, rituals represent the institutionalization of this structure. It is never the *subject* of the desire that one wants, but only the *object* of desire.

A second group of scientific arguments regarding the roots of human violence originates from psychological theories of aggression based on a relief model. According to these arguments, the human being is phylogenetically programmed with an instinct for self-preservation and aggression. Frustrations multiply and accumulate in the human psyche, and when they reach a certain limit they form a critical mass and aggression explodes. In sexual activity this is manifest in the orgasm, while in other physical expressions it takes the form of violent actions. Those who advocate this theory tend to include in the structure all violent acts, be they crimes, quarrels, wars, torture, or whatever.

Freud, Konrad Lorenz, and B. F. Skinner could be cited as examples of theorists who might fall into this category. Each in his own way is willing to accept the Darwinian hypothesis of natural selection and the survival of the fittest, yet they all begin from the assumption that aggression works in favor of life. All of them, therefore, agree that aggression is vital and indispensable for survival. Aggression, in and of itself, builds and shapes the biological law of life in all its aspects, including the human and cultural spheres of politics, economics, and so on.

All these theories can be criticized at all levels. As a general comment, we can say that at least two fundamental errors can be identified. First, they extend unreasonably from the animal world to that of humans, and interpret the animal world based on an anthropocentric assumption of aggression. Second, their arguments go in a circle, concluding that "the nature of Man is aggressive because Man has always shown traits of aggressiveness in his behavior."

¹ Orig. ed.: *La violence et le sacré* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1972).

The most comprehensive criticism was made by Erich Fromm. After examining the physiological, neurological, and sociological data, Fromm concluded that wars and aggressions are neither natural nor normal, but have their roots in the cultural sphere. He also argues that these phenomena are not found in all cultures, but only those that are "deficient," that is, cultures of accumulation and power.

Assumptions regarding the aggressive nature of man, uncritically advanced by the proponents of the relief theory, have no historical backing. War is a form of institutionalized violence. The first permanent army, a body specialized in violence, was created in Babylon when the society changed from matriarchal to patriarchal. Prehistory did not know war, although violence perhaps existed. Civilization founded on power began around 3000 BCE. From that time on, the number of wars has increased over the centuries in geometric progression. And yet, even in the so-called Dark Ages, in Europe four days of the week were dedicated to the peace of God and all bellicose activities were prohibited. No population has ever conceived such devastating wars and power struggles as those waged by twentieth-century Man.

It would perhaps be useful at this point to make a distinction between power and authority. Power, *potestas*, energy, *Macht*, requires a great ability to do something. In contrast, authority needs people to recognize and accept it. Power is exercised by those who know how to make decisions, while authority is the prerogative of those who are capable of "augmenting" or "letting grow," as the etymology of the word suggests (*auktoritas*, from the Latin verb *augeo*). This "letting things grow" has nothing to do with anarchy or anomaly. Suicides arise from anomalies in which one loses all sense of belonging and connection. The *augur* was the ancient Roman priest who sanctioned that which was divine. Authoritative criticism of power is the role of the prophet.

Erich Fromm identifies two forms of aggression:

- Defensive or reactive aggression, which can be defined as good. This form is biologically explainable in that it is inspired by the instinct of self-defense and self-preservation; in a way, it cannot even be defined as aggression.
- "Malignant" aggression, on the other hand, is true aggression, and opens the way to destructive impetus, sadism, masochism and so on. This instinct is not found in any other mammal.

"Malignant" aggression is not biologically transmitted, it is not innate, nor is it a form of natural reaction. If an animal is trained to be aggressive, it can also be brought back to nonaggression. There is no evidence to show that the toughest chimpanzee or the strongest elephant necessarily becomes the leader. Furthermore, the predatory nature of animals does not generally prompt them to kill individuals of their own species, and rarely those of other species.

Concerning the problem of living space, it is not overpopulation that triggers violence in Man, but rather it is violence that is caused by the destruction of many. In the First World War the French killed the "Huns," the *boches*; in Vietnam, the American soldiers "wiped out the yellow man," and from the First World War onward, one of the officers' main tasks was to shoot soldiers who did not advance.

We must dispel the cliché that the predatory instinct is at the origin of war. In Man's case, it would be more correct to talk about "instrumental" aggression, aggression that comes from greed, which is one of the factors that are most distinctly noninstinctive. Animals are never greedy. The technocratic complex has its roots in greed, not in freedom.

We must therefore say that war is not natural or normal, but cultural. Not all cultures have practiced war. Even in "linear time," 95 percent of the time Man has been a hunter and not a warrior. The urban transformation that accompanied the Neolithic revolution was characterized by the passage from a matriarchal to a patriarchal civilization. Governments and bureaucracy made their appearance in 3000 BCE and created the objective conditions for wars to have a purpose. Today, perhaps, war is no longer needed.

The monocultural approach to peace has not progressed beyond the Latin archetype of *pax romana*. *Pax* suggests a legal "pact" and constitutes the necessary condition for the development of a given civilization or worldview. It provides the conditions for guaranteeing an order that is enforced by the victor or the "civilized" population. This so-called peace is necessary if we are to impose our religion, our economy, or our democracy. For example, the article "Research on Peace" in Ritter's *Historical Dictionary of Philosophy* states that "the search for peace begins with the fundamental axiom that world peace has become a vital condition for our technological and scientific era."² What this means, of course, is that without world peace it would not be possible to maintain and exploit the benefits enjoyed by the technological world. It is taken for granted that the scientific and technological age is a universal good that everyone wants to preserve. Viewed from another perspective, what it is saying is that we must impose our peace in order to have the world we desire.

I would argue, however, that peace is the true goal of human life. It cannot be placed on the same level as external order; it cannot function in favor of one and not all the others. It is an anthropological, not a political reality. We must stop considering peace as the fruit of a civilization or a technological development. Violence arises from a nonequity of power. Civilizations were built on power, and the unleashing of their violence turned into war and chaos. Up to today this is how the system has functioned. However, now that we have reached the limits of this state of affairs in the post-Hiroshima world, this system no longer works. The situation brings back the question of the true nature of Man and civilization. Peace cannot be built on the values of the victors. The problem of peace shakes the very foundations of Man, society, and Reality itself.

² Joachim Ritter, ed., *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972).

PRELIMINARIES ON PEACE

*There is nothing better than peace,
in which every war,
of the powers of heaven and of the earth
wastes away.*

Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to Ephesians XIII.2

The Myth of Peace

To say that peace is a myth is to use the word "myth" in both of its apparently most contradictory acceptations. Myth in fact represents the most powerful of the forces that guide human footsteps—and at the same time the weakest, indeed the most false, thing in human existence.

Myth resembles the saving "mirage" that drives a person to keep forging ahead and not give in to the searing heat of life's desert or to the objective deception that the oasis was not there—even though, when we came to the place where the oasis was supposed to be, the mirage ever encourages us to go on, toward another utopia.

The study that follows treats of this myth from one perspective alone: the religious. The word "religion" still bears the scars of history, both recent and less recent. It piques a kind of allergy that has settled within us, caused by the wounds that a distorted notion of religion has produced in the Western soul.

Antonio Machado will be our example and model. Machado is a profoundly religious personality; we need not demonstrate that. The sensitivity, depth, and form of his poetry are but revelations of the transcendent in the immanent:

*Who has seen the face of the Hispanic God?
My heart awaits
the Iberian Man with strong hands,
who will carve in Castilian oak
the burned God of the brown earth.*

But it would be illegitimate to wish to make Machado into a conventional Catholic, a defender of the religious institutions of his time, in Spain or in the West.

*Who insults God on the altars,
no longer mindful of the looming destiny,
has also dreamt routes upon the seas,
and said: God walked upon the sea.*

It is in this Machadian sense that we shall speak here of the religious dimension of peace, although I make an effort to delimit with precision the terms I use. Paraphrasing the Latin dedication, I would interpret Machado's lines as follows:

*If life is a destiny,
God is life's way.*

The book is in fact dedicated to those who find the goal at each step along the way and, accordingly, do not hurtle furiously to the fore. Hope is not of the future, but of the invisible. We shall not, however, be speaking here of linear time.

The thesis of this study will be clear from the very outset: neither the dualism that sunders religion from politics nor the monism that identifies the two corresponds to reality. Our example will be peace.

*Lord, war is evil and barbaric; war,
hateful to mothers, makes souls mad;
during a war, who will sow the earth?
Who will reap the corn ears that June gilded?*

The summary, concentrated character of these pages obliges me to cite myself in order to clarify the sense of what I mean. There comes a moment in life when one must require consistency of one's own thought. Everything is connected with everything. Consistency does not mean "system," let alone "logical system." It means transparency and simplicity—which is not synonymous with easiness. An author's true thoughts may be seed for readers, but they should be flower for the one who writes them down. "Difficulty" does not mean obscurity.

*Let us honour the Lord who made Nothingness
and carved our reason in faith.*

I do not mean to stress the importance of the thesis I am defending. I only say that its consequences for our culture are not insignificant. What we need is not a revolution but a metamorphosis. Radical *metanoia*, of which I have written so much, does not mean one more ideology; it means transcending (not denying) the very field of the mental, of the *nous*.¹

While Chapter 2 of this study is of a markedly philosophical character, although it is based on history, Chapter 3 is in a different style. Just as the second part represents some of the fruit I have gathered from my courses and seminars at the University of California, the third has its origin in my encounters with contemporary political life, and has been the object of conferences, discussions, and lectures. Especially memorable for me was a conference in an Italian city, sponsored by its mayor (of the Italian Communist Party, incidentally).

¹ Ed. note: Panikkar uses the Greek term *metanoia* of the Gospels—usually translated as "conversion"—in its strongest sense, i.e., going beyond (*meta-*) the mental level (*-noia, nous*).

It seems fitting here to recall a sermon of St. Augustine, interweaving a translation for our world:

Two persons decide to go contemplate the sunrise—videre solem oriturum. (Is there anything more peaceful and beautiful? We all aspire to light. "I've thought about living till dawn," runs a line of Machado. But these two persons are the rich and the poor, the rightist and the leftist, Russian and American, believer and non-believer, white and black, man and woman.) They begin to discuss where the sun will appear, and the best ways to observe it. (Differences of ideology, of temperament, of culture, of religion, of race, and so on. Any further explanation is superfluous. Is this not perhaps the human condition?) They begin to quarrel, and in their discussion, they come to blows. Indeed, they beat each other fiercely. (Quarrels and wars escalate: one sees how they begin, but not how they will end. The adversaries do mutual harm.) In the heat of the fray, they gouge out each other's eyes. How foolish these persons, who now can no longer enjoy the contemplation of the dawn! (In wars and disputes there are no winners. All are losers. And what is worse, the noble object of their contention—freedom, welfare, justice—has become unreachable for them both. The current situation is sufficiently clear: we are gouging out our own eyes.)

These pages are written in order to help convince us that it is beautiful to see the sunrise, and that dawn gleams for all persons, provided we direct our gaze eastward, though it yet be night.

The subject of peace is too serious to leave it in the hands of the politicians, and it is too complex to entrust it to religious persons. It is a subject whose treatment is incumbent on Man as such. Therefore it is a political as well as a religious problem. It is something real, and Reality itself is not merely temporal, nor exclusively eternal, nor—least of all—half one and half the other. Neither dualisms nor monisms are convincing. Machado caught a glimpse of a-dualism when he wrote,

*But image is never a liar—
there is no mirror; all is source
...
all the sea in every drop,
all the minnows in every egg,
all new.*

Las Morras del Zunaco (La Mancha)
Epiphany 1989

Receiving Peace

The act in which a peace prize is received is of itself a symbolic gesture.² And if, besides, a bronze sculpture by Pablo Serrano of two clasped hands is bestowed, then the symbolism is even more obvious.

² This section reproduces some passages from my acceptance speech after receiving the Antonio Machado Prize, delivered in the Rector's Hall of the University of Alcalá de Henares on June 6, 1991.

Hermeneutics of Gesture

Before all else, peace, like this prize, is *received*. Peace is not given. We have the current and past experience of the fact that, despite all good intentions, the struggle for peace is counterproductive. The struggle for peace generally creates another war, and therefore produces an imbalance that, in the long or short term, will cause a new destabilization, which will probably be more profound than the first.

Peace may be deserved, but it surely is not given, nor won. Peace is received. We need a "feminine" attitude in order to receive it. Our predominant civilization has relegated the feminine to a position of inferiority. And in saying "feminine" I refer not exclusively to women in our societies, but to the feminine attitude, of which, evidently, women generally know much more than men do. But I would like to emphasize the fact that in every whole human being there is an androgynous dimension that, sociologically at least, has been ignored and even scorned in many climes.

I refer to the receptive attitude toward life, things, reality: to the attitude that, by receiving and embracing, transforms. I am thinking of reality's deepest trait—the one revealed to us in one of the most universal acts in the universe: assimilation, which ranges from the absorbing capacity of the orbit of eight electrons to the Eucharist; from the force that leads to organic growth (by receiving from without what is necessary for within) to the instinct that leads to a deep sense of "commensality" with things, persons, and Gods. It is by receiving, by conceiving, that a new being is created.

Since the time of Descartes—just to name a noble "villain"—we have so taken our distance from matter in general and our body in particular that, as a result, gesture has lost nearly all of its symbolic force. An example is the sweeping invasion of the handshake as a gesture of greeting, which seems to be replacing the embrace, the kiss, the bow, the *anjali*, and the glance. What is received must be received with body and soul. Mere intention will not do. Hellenic wisdom calls our attention to the fact that form, exteriarity, envelope, appearance is the *morphe*, which means, at one and the same time, the essence, the most real element, the furthest recesses of the thing. Content and container, meaning and its expression are as soul and body—which may be distinct, but which are inseparable lifelong.

To receive a prize with both our hands, with our whole being—body and spirit, without dichotomies of any kind—is also the adequate manner of receiving peace, and in receiving it, re-create it. This is not the place for a disquisition on the cultural schizophrenia emerging from a separation between the bodily and the spiritual. But it may not be inappropriate to recall the fact that hypocrisy—existential, and not only moral—is the capital sin of our civilization: a lack of consistency between the within and the without, between what is said and what is done, between the material and the spiritual. It is instructive to recall that, in Sanskrit, the word for a "lie" reminds us that a lie does not reside in an inadequacy, nor even in subjectivity, but in the very destruction of the cosmic order: *anṛta* (disorder).

Peace as a Gift

The receptivity to which I allude leads us to an acknowledgment that peace is received not as something owed, deserved, won, but as a gift, as a present, as a grace. And here the word "grace," akin to the Sanskrit *gurtas*, opens up the whole spectrum of words: the "gracious," the "gratifying," the "gratuitous," the "agreeable," which makes us be pleased with ourselves, and feel grateful. To receive something as a grace represents maximal reception. Now the thing received is received not as a right or a duty, not as something owed or due, and much less so as something to be taken for granted. It is a grace, a surprise.

We enter the real world, which is the world not of logical deduction but of novelty, of the undeserved and unthought, of the gratuitous. Here is why a too-disdained Christian Scholasticism has said that creation is a *creatio continua*, a constant, gratuitous arising from nothing, out of the clamps of history or the rails of the laws of nature. The world is new at every moment, however it may preserve the traces of the past—like those of the Demiurge, for that matter, in this worldview that I cite only by way of an example. Nothing would be sadder than a world based only on logical deductions, than a reality that consisted only of conclusions of syllogisms, than a society in which gift would have lost its meaning and were no longer in force. To receive peace as a gift implies this whole attitude. And it is in its reception that peace grows and radiates, on the outside as well as the inside of ourselves.

But—and herewith we plunge to greater depths—we must wonder: From whom is peace received? Who is the giver of this gift? And it is here that the gift of peace shows its true face.

Surely it cannot be a gift from oneself. I cannot give myself peace—not even interior, internal peace. Here as well we collide with one of the most stubbornly rooted dogmas in modern Western culture: the august dominion of the will, whether it be the will to power, to conquest, to knowledge, or to go to heaven. The sincere and total reception of the gift of peace shows us that the will, in this area, is not sovereign. I cannot give myself peace. Much as I may wish to have peace, and invoke the power of suggestion in order to have it, peace is not subject to the rule of my will. And if this is true for the individual, it is all the more true for peoples. The will to peace does not suffice for its having. More wars have been waged to preserve peace than to perpetuate struggle. I can want this or that, but I cannot want to stop wanting. Wanting has been given to me. Any intent of peace that was not to be "feminine," that did not come as a gift, but that imposed itself as a right or a conquest, be it in all thirst for justice, will never be true peace. We have the proof of it in the fragility of such "peaces" as are the fruit of the will. It is enough that the will of another oppose us in order to have our whole desired, beloved peace come crashing down around our ears.

Peace cannot come to us from ourselves, as the outcome of our will; but neither does it come to us as a present from a powerful person, or from others, who bestow it on us condescendingly as an alms. I have said that peace is received, not given. And I now repeat that peace cannot come to us as given, nor, still less, imposed by others. In that case we should feel uncomfortable, even under duress, in a state of imbalance, and thereby of a want of peace. We cannot have or enjoy peace if peace is a favor bestowed by a giver, however good a giver. Peace does not flourish in the kingdom of *heteronomy*.

But there is more. In the times of a naïve, a-critical belief in an all-powerful God, peace could perhaps have come to us from this Supreme Being, who might even have permitted himself the luxury of predestining some to eternal peace and excluding others from it. A goodly part—the good part—of humanity's current consciousness feels this state of things as an affront to human dignity as well as to the very nature of the Divine. Peace cannot be the gift of a capricious "almighty" Being. No one can feel at peace if at the mercy of another, even if He is called "The Other." The Divine is neither myself (pantheism or monism) nor another (monotheism or dualism). But this is not the moment to speak of the Trinity.

Peace is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, Christian tradition says: something that belongs to the very tree of Reality, although it is something that can fail to blossom and to ripen. Peace can only be a harmony of the very reality in which we share when we find ourselves in a situation of receptiveness by virtue of not having placed obstacles in the way of the rhythm of reality, of the Spirit, of the ultimate structure of the universe, or what have you.

The great difficulty today consists in approaching this gift in this "fourth world" we have built. The historical Man has lived until now in three worlds. These worlds have not always been peaceful, nor even always good, but they made possible a certain sharing on the part of the human individual who dwelt in them. There were the world of the Gods, that of Man, and that of things: the religious, the human, and the earthly. Each of these worlds had its peculiarity, its laws, and its ways of approaching the destiny of the Gods, the capriciousness of Man, and the hazards of Nature. Religion, politics, and technology were the grand arts of life. Modern Man has created a "fourth" world: the artifical world, in which the Divine is banished, the Human tamed, and the Material subdued. If God exists, He must be subordinated to the second principle of thermodynamics. If Man means to subsist, he must bend to the exigencies of technology. And if things aim at emerging, they have to submit to their transformation into artificial entities, from the foods that we ingest to the clothes with which we cover ourselves, and the materials, houses, and other implements with which we protect ourselves. That represents a mutation in human history.

Our interest now is to observe that, in a world like that, peace also looks as if it could only be artificial.

A Prefabricated Gift?

And this is the novelty and difficulty of peace in our days.

The new adventure of Earth—upon which, until well into the historical era, human beings had discharged an insignificant role, whereas it now appears that they hold in their hands the fate of their own existence, if not of all life on the planet—invests the problem of peace with cosmic proportions.

The capital problem, nowadays, is no longer that of East/West or North/South, urgent as these problems may be. The capital problem today is that of the mutation at which we are now arriving, and of our responsibility to manage the part that falls to us in this same unfurling of life on the Earth.

How may one receive peace in a world in which everything seems to be prefabricated? The most unsettling response consists in saying that the suggested *metanoia* requires of us that we overcome the inertia of the mind and have the boldness to overcome the very posing of the question. It is no longer a matter of a discussion about means, which is what the technocratic mentality reduces problems to, but of a discussion about the very ends of Life and Reality.

For this reason, the problem of peace is not only a political, or merely moral, or exclusively religious question. It is instructive to observe that *metanoia*, within a world influenced by Christian civilization, has been interpreted either as "revolution," with emphasis on the political change that would be necessary, or as "penance," thus stressing the moral aspect, or indeed as "repentance," with a purchase on the religious side. If nothing comes to us simply given, but rather everything is built, then we shall not be able to receive peace as a gift.

And here is the great current temptation: to wish to build peace as we manufacture anything else—hence the fact that a profound reflection on peace interrogates us on the very foundations of current culture, based on technoscience. Obviously there is no question of turning the clock back, or of feeling the nostalgia of a lost paradise. It is a matter of being conscious of the anthropological change calling us to take part in it as both actors and spectators. The task is enormous. We do not even have the words to use. Only poets can express the inexpressible.

The Antonio Machado Foundation has had the praiseworthy intuition that it ought to place these studies on peace under the symbol not of a politician, a scientist, or a saint, but of

a poet, a Man who creates with his or her word, and believes that the *animal loquens* that we are possessives in the word its dignity and its responsibility, in the face of the metamorphosis of reality—to which we must contribute.

Toward a "Philosophia Pacis"

The expression *philosophia pacis* aims not only at evoking philosophical speculation or critical thought.³ It also seeks to inspire the peace that is proper to all authentic philosophic activity, that is, it attempts to show the philosophy inherent in the actual reality of peace.

The expression *philosophia pacis* can be understood in the sense of an objective genitive, but also in the sense of a subjective genitive. I would like to say something about this latter aspect.

The Philosophy of Peace

To aim to create a philosophy that springs from peace itself is a claim that flies in the face of the modern currents of Western philosophical thought. Philosophy is customarily regarded as the hunt for truth with the rifle of reason—although often it is no more than the pursuit of clarity with the pistol of calculus. In other parts of the world, however, we find a livelier notion of philosophy, nor is this notion unknown in the traditional history of the West. An authority as outstanding as Marcus Tullius Cicero, for example, describes philosophy as *cultura animi* (the culture of the soul), which we could interpret as the culture of the *animus* and the *anima*, the *psyché* and *pneuma*. When our soul is duly cultivated, and our spirit harmoniously formed, then a *philosophia pacis* spontaneously arises. This philosophy is something more than a peaceful philosophy; it is a philosophy that reflects the harmony of Reality, and, at the same time, contributes to it—a philosophy that is simultaneously a cause and an effect of peace: effect of peace because it arises from a calmed, peaceful spirit, and cause of peace because it increases or reestablishes the harmony of the universe.

It is, first of all, a matter of a true, authentic philosophy. It is an intellectual enterprise undertaken for the purpose of understanding, as far as possible, the mystery of Reality. It is a view of Being, and a conscious participation in the life of Being. Without a certain connaturality with what is to be known, there cannot be true cognition. A *philosophia pacis*, then, presupposes that the ultimate structure of reality is harmonious. Now, this supposition is a strict tautology and nothing more, since, by virtue of an internal requirement of our own, we have to call the ultimate structure of the universe "harmony." How could we assert that reality is not harmonious, that is, that reality could break away from what it ought to be? For this, we should have at our disposition a model extrinsic to reality itself, which would permit us to postulate the supertranscendence of an "oughting to be." But such a model does not exist, and we have no other criterion available than reality itself. In the last analysis, only that which *is* enables us to measure, think, judge, what *is*. What *has to be*, then, is subordinate to that which *is*. But this "*is*," understood as synonymous with *being*, also means *becoming* and *having to be*. Accordingly, a *philosophia pacis* is more than a passive observation: it is also an active participation.

It is Cicero, again, who popularized and developed the notion of *contemplatio*. As I have shown elsewhere, contemplation is not only *theória*. Nor, of course, is *theória* only "theory"

³ This section is a translation of some pages I wrote in an expression of gratitude for a volume published in my honor: M. Siguán, *Philosophia pacis: Homenaje a Ramón Panikkar* (Madrid: Simbolo, 1989). Although some points have already been made, I think that this introductory summary will be helpful for an overview of the problem.

in the modern, current sense of the word. Contemplation is at once theory and praxis, intellectual effort and active engagement. "Uninterrupted meditation and action are the best of all remedies," confided the great *guru* Marpa to his disciple Milarepa, that peerless Tibetan saint of the twelfth century. The true contemplative is a person of action as well as of thought. Contemplation is the integration of theory and praxis. Or better, contemplation is the unaltered harmony between theory and praxis—although, once a division occurs between them, only a *new innocence* can implement that integration once more. This is the *philosophia pacis* to which I refer.

Let us say it another way. The old Christian Scholastics already questioned the possibility of cultivating an authentic philosophy without living in the grace of God. The old Hindu scholastics as well asserted that, without a serene and pacified spirit, one could not attain to truth. Truth is liberating. To this, modern Western culture responds that one can be at once a great mathematician and a morally depraved person. I would object that not even in this case is that so, understanding mathematics in its deepest and most traditional sense. It is so if we understand mathematics as mere arithmetic, as something that a computer can manage (quicker and better than we can, surely). But thinking—or any other human act involving the totality of our humanity, such as aesthetics—cannot be authentic unless our *entire* being is present in it. And our being cannot be totally present if we remain torn in our existence, that is, unless our being is whole.

Perhaps one of the causes of the precarious modern situation is the struggle to reach a philosophy of peace that is not *philosophia pacis* in the sense that I have just given. Then we are led to impose *our own* concept of peace. However, nothing of what can arise from a human spirit not in harmony with itself and with the world can be called philosophy, let alone *philosophia pacis*. "True discovery [is] the one that allows me to leave off doing philosophy when I so desire, the one that secures peace," wrote Wittgenstein dramatically in his *Philosophical Investigations*, thereby endorsing the notion—good child of modernity that he is—that "philosophy" is no more than a question of argument. But this is still a "provincial," narrow notion of philosophy in the post-Cartesian West.

All in all, the expression *philosophia pacis* contains a program for and a challenge to the very notion of philosophy (and further on, the nature of peace). Everything is related. *Pratityasamutpāda* (radical relativity), *sarvam-sarvātmakan* (all is in relation to all), *panta en pāsin* (so that God may be all in all⁴), say the Buddhist, Śivaitic, and Christian traditions, respectively.

The Phenomenology of Peace

Peace seems to emerge as a symbol of our time. No other symbol appears to have the strength and universality of peace. But what are symbols? It is through them that we build the world of values and meaning. Symbols are the bricks from which myths are built. They differ considerably from concepts. While the meaning of a concept is limited to a single sense, the symbol has many values and meanings. A symbol takes shape in an environment of relationships; it involves a range of subjects and even objects.

Let us try to formulate a genetic approach to the problem. As we have said, peace consists of a group of relationships. It is not an ontological state, but is genetically linked to the awareness of conflict. Conflict and peace arise together. The greater the conflict, the more urgent the demand for peace. In conflict-free times, peace is taken for granted. The

⁴ 1 Cor 15:28.

adolescent discovers peace while tackling the conflicts of growth and maturity. The mystic finds peace by going through the dark night.

Peace has a somewhat feminine quality. Warriors and founders of empires have always been for the most part male.

Peace appears in three forms: the resolution, the solution, or the dissolution of conflict. Let us consider these three separately.

a. A conflict is resolved when the one creating the problem is eliminated. Resolution occurs when we return to the past, to the previous status quo, the antebellum state.

b. The solution to the conflict is forward-looking. It is not found by eliminating the cause of the conflict, but rather by overcoming the enemy. Peace comes at the end. The struggle is for the *status ad quem*.

c. The dissolution of the conflict lies in the present, in the status quo. It requires the transcending of the situation. It is found in the *status in quo* or in the *status transcendentis*.

These three attitudes toward conflict involve clearly distinct approaches. The first attempts to eradicate evil, and so priority is given to morality. The second seeks victory through action, and here the historical process becomes the most important aspect of reality. The third represents a process of *gnōsis*, and so the truth is given priority. The problem dissolves when the truth is seen or realized. This is the path of interiority, mysticism, and spirituality.

One might say that peace is meta-natural. This does not mean it is antinatural, supernatural, or anatural. It comes neither from the Human nor from the Divine. The meta-natural implies that it comes naturally, but without being automatic or, perhaps, normal. It must be attained, conquered, deserved, accepted. It is given to us, but we must be worthy of it. It is not engendered or inborn. It blossoms during the process of becoming, which implies activity, movement, dynamism.

In previous ages, God, the Empire, Dharmaraja,⁵ and others were the symbols of an unchallenged unifying myth. Democracy, Civilization, and Classless Society were others. These symbols no longer sound convincing; they have lost their unifying effectiveness. Peace, as a concept or doctrine or cosmovision, also lacks this unifying force, but as a polysemic reality, peace can become a symbol for our time.

If we examine the various cultural expressions of the idea of peace, what do we see as an underlying hypothesis or concept behind all the words that speak about peace? What basic metaphor emerges? On what is peace based? The most common denominator seems to be the conviction that there is a cosmic order: *rta*, *ordo*, *dharma*, harmony, *sat*, *essere*, *pratityasamutpāda*. The idea of order originates etymologically from the root *or* or *ar*. *Ordior* means to weave, to arrange the threads. *Ar* means to join, to put together. *Arm*, *areté* (virtue), and *ars* (art, technique) all derive from the root *ar*.

St. Augustine defined peace as *tranquilitas ordinis*, the tranquility of order. Peace has variously been identified with Brahñā, YHWH, and Christ—all of whom represent the fullness and order of the cosmos. Conflicts, wars, and violence, however, have destroyed this order. Rift and disorder have been conceived in varying degrees as sin, *duḥkha*, *Sund*, schism, or a tear in the cosmic fabric. The question then is how do we heal the entire cosmos? How can we reestablish order? Peace is what can restore the original order.

Once it has been broken, there are two ways that order can be recomposed: the inner and the outer way. The inner way is similar to that of the archer in Eastern martial arts: the heart of things has been pierced, and it is this that needs to be healed through discipline

⁵ Another name for Yama, the lord of death.

and inner struggle. The outer way deals with practical, external actions: the machine stops working, so the problem must be identified and the faulty part replaced. The breakage is allocated to the outside world. If it is cold, heating is provided with a boiler. Peace requires a correlation between inner and outer, between the sacred and the profane. There must be an intrinsic relationship between the two.

The problem arises when the two realms separate, and one develops at the expense of the other. As it says in the Gospel of Thomas, however, the kingdom of God comes when the inner is like the outer. *Ecclesia* and *Imperium* meet. The bond between the two consists in neither an inner nor an outer relationship. Space, time, destiny, and order belong to both. Contemplation leads to action. It is not enough to simply change consciousness or structures for all the rest to follow. Both sides require radical work. The relationship is neither heteronomous nor autonomous, but rather intrinsic or ontonomic. Peace involves ownership of things, not the "private property" of a privileged party. It does not fall within a private/collective context. Consciousness and social structures both have to be changed. We must begin with ourselves, but end with others. The vicious circle must be transformed into a vital circle.

In order to discover the deeper meaning of peace, dialectical thinking must be overcome. Peace is a mystery that goes beyond the human intellect. It will not come through some manipulation of consciousness geared to changing the social structure. We must smell the scent of that inner peace. It starts with ourselves—the soul, the body, and the intellect. These are not just a window from which to seek a safe point of view, but a bridge that must interact with reality as an integral part of itself.

Although not exhaustively, a passive aspect characterizes peace. Peace cannot be imposed—it has to be found. It comes like the fruit of a revelation and involves acceptance and assimilation, like Siva drinking poison, or like Christ who bears the sins of the world. Peace means acceptance of the world and of others.

To build a positive notion of peace, we must begin to identify the dead ends. As in negative theology, the first step is to recognize what we *shouldn't* do or say. As I mentioned earlier, the arms race represents the first dead end. The second takes the form of pan-economic ideology. In this view, everything depends on economic competition. It implies the monetization of life. One's worth depends on how much one has, and this, as I have said, is closely related to technology and also to the scientific perspective—which, however important, has been extrapolated from its own sphere and has ended up by dominating our whole vision of reality. This results in the quantification of life. Money makes it possible. Having an excessive amount of money may not be disagreeable, but every other aspect of life suffers from it.

Positive suggestions for continuing the human pilgrimage and making it easier should be prompted by a different vision of the human being. We have the wrong idea of what Man is. Although this is not the place to go into this in detail, we might start from Parmenides, who identified thinking with being, or from Descartes's *Cogito ergo sum*. In this line of thought, Man considers himself a thinking machine; feelings belong to passion and must be dominated. The idea of Man as a rational animal appeared with Aristotle, but it was the Latin translation that coined his definition as *animal rationale*. What Aristotle actually said was, "Animal through which *logos* passes." *Ratio* refers to the overall faculty of becoming aware. *Logos* is the word, the power to give meaning to life. It means having relationships, relating. It is the deepest exchange of love and thought.

We need a new anthropology. The word cannot exist without someone to speak it, someone to whom it is spoken, the subject, and the means. These are the four dimensions of Reality. If I am a speaking being, I am not alone; I need another. The word can also be expressed in dance, song, and gesture.

A new unifying myth seems to be emerging, a myth centered on peace, but a myth cannot be created artificially. Cosmic and human harmony is possible, but we cannot force it. The propulsion toward peace must transcend utopian desires and avoid the Platonic dream. Reality is not a two-story building—the cave in the dark down here and the “real thing” out there, or above, or reserved for some later time. Peace does not need a paradise. All it needs is people who are eager to listen and work together.

The Challenge of “Philosophia Pacis”

It is easy enough to refer to Aśoka's edict of peace (the victory of *dhamma*, as he calls it), or to condemn Flavius Vegetius Renatus's saying, “Qui desiderat pacem, praeparet bellum” (Let the one who desires peace prepare for war), or to cite Pindar's famous aphorism, “War is sweet only to those who have not tried it,” or to repeat Erasmus's statement at the very beginning of his *Querela Pacis* (that peace is the “source of all felicity”), and to recall the many noble souls who have discovered the vital importance of peace in all eras and climes. The true challenge arises when it befalls us to have to act in accordance with this discovery, without any support other than that of our conscience.

The spoken word is always more powerful than the written phrase. I would like to communicate something more than simple ideas. I would like to make it understood that we are all *authors* of the word, and not hearers only—and that acts are more powerful than the mere words. I would like to communicate the sensation that all of us, writers and readers alike, are committed to one of the most fascinating, most difficult, and most promising tasks of life: the creation of peace. As we will see, the problem of peace cannot be solved merely by having an efficient administration, since it embraces the ultimate foundations of human culture, and in the last analysis, those of reality itself. It concerns us all.

Even Western classical antiquity left it in writing. Very convincingly, Italo Lana⁶ shows, supporting his position with an abundant bibliography, that, for classical authors, peace was absolutely not only the absence of war. The same attitude is quite evident for many traditional civilizations. Aristotle himself declares peace to be the very end of the *polis*.⁷ In fact, peace is bound up with the cosmic order, and human peace is our share in that order. So, let us do what belongs to us and realize our end. To live in peace is the end of life itself.

Peace is not a means, but an end. Peace is not the simple absence of war (of whatever kind) and the opportunity to devote ourselves to our ordinary affairs and chores. Peace is not “there” to be used. It is not a value *ad usum*, St. Bonaventure would say, but *ad fructum*: it has been given us—it is a gift, then—in order that we may enjoy and delight in it. It is not an *uti*, but a *frui*; it is not a means, but an end. It is not as if I *had* peace so as to be able to do something else; rather, I *am* peace (to paraphrase St. Paul⁸), and, being peace, I live the fullness of life.

But here is the difficulty of accomplishing this peace in a civilization that has nearly atrophied in us any sense of true joy, of “fruition”—of *delectatio*, as the Renaissance would have it.

If peace is regarded only as a means, then it is scarcely to be wondered at that we, in our so-called times of peace, should go in quest of something more interesting and end up at war again. Here is manifested the political strength of contemplation: it reveals to us that what so many today call “quality of life” means something more than hedonistic refinement. Life has its meaning in being *lived*, and not merely in spending one's life in creating conditions of life for the future or for others.

⁶ *L'idea della pace nell'antichità* (Florence: Edizioni Cultura della Pace, 1991).

⁷ *Politics* VII.

⁸ Eph 2:14.

I have said "contemplation" because none of this is possible without a transcending of linear time, without an experience of bare life, so to speak, of being itself, of naked life. And this goes hand in hand with life's most elementary functions, which, as a matter of fact, are also the most fundamental.

The awareness that life is an end in itself has been too much lost. It is a truth as simple as it is difficult. The great religious alienation consists in believing that true life is the future life, and in seeking immortality in the future. This is *not* eternal life, the fullness of life. But a deeper degradation still is the scientific caricature that presents life to us as a simple project for the future, that never stops moving, in which everything is a means to a utopian, unattainable end, with ourselves as mere links in an evolutionary chain. The arms race is a sign, but so is the knowledge race. The very word "race" is suspicious. Life is not for racing, but for living.

The idea of peace, too, can degenerate, obviously. Two great examples, perhaps—which I relate with irony and a sense of history—are the *pax romana* and the "new international order" of the *pax Americana*. The former was based on a belief in the protection of the "civilized" world—that of the *civis*, Rome—from the barbarians. The latter attempts to justify itself with similar arguments, appealing to the defense of democracy and "free trade."

The fact that peace is an end also means that we must not resign ourselves to positing it at the term of life, in death, or in afterlife. That there is or can be a perfect eschatological peace does not imply that we ought to await the *eschaton* in order to enjoy a peace that may be genuine, if imperfect. In Christian terms, the resurrection, which is not a resurrection of souls but of bodies, is not only an eschatological dogma but a hope of the present that enables us to have full joy here and now.⁹ Its homeomorphic equivalent is the Śivaitic *jīvanmukta*.

I have dedicated this book to those who have already found the goal along the way: to those who have arrived and who no longer run. Their journey is a stroll, and so they are ready to go anywhere. They are the "peacemakers" of the Beatitudes.¹⁰ They no longer feel anxious to accomplish great exploits or to create great empires, and have time for everything. The eschatological ardor of the first Christians is understandable, but, now that the *parousia* has not arrived, we ought to have grasped the gospel message more in depth: not that we are to sit with our arms folded; quite the contrary. Not having our hands busy with ourselves and our selfish concerns, we are free to devote ourselves to that which we believe to be most important: peace.

⁹ Jn 16:24.

¹⁰ Mt 5:9.

THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION OF POLITICAL PEACE

*Yad eveha tad amutra,
yad amutra tad anviha*

*Here just as there,
there just as here.*

KathU II.1.10

*So in heaven
as on earth¹*

Mt 6:10

When human beings sunder their relationship with earth, seeking to be sufficient unto themselves, they turn into monsters. Wishing to dominate the earth, they destroy themselves. Contemporary ecological awareness tells us something of this.² When human beings sunder their relationship with the heavens, seeking to be independent, they turn into automata that destroy others. The concrete historical situation of our day shows us this palpably. The cosmotheandric correlation is constitutive of Reality.³

The two citations that serve as an epigraph to this chapter, to which we could have added parallel assertions from nearly all cultures, tell us that Man's activity and his very nature are constitutively related to the whole universe, as the epigraph in chapter 1 also reminds us. All of this inclines us to think that peace is more than just a political matter, and leads us to suspect that perhaps the precariousness of political peace has deeper roots than those of the defective transmission of our political machinery.

¹ This translation from the Lord's Prayer reverses the syntax of the Greek not in order to contradict the original, but only to emphasize the a-dualist aspect of the Incarnation and of Reality.

² See my concept of ecosophy in *La sfida di scoprirsi monaco* (Assisi: Cittadella, 1991); now in Volume I, Part 2 of this *Opera Omnia*; and in *Ecosofia: la nuova saggezza per una spiritualità della terra* (Assisi: Cittadella, 1994).

³ See my *The Cosmotheandric Experience* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993). Now in Volume VIII of this *Opera Omnia*.

Introduction and Thesis

War as a Religious Problem

From time immemorial, war has constituted a religious problem. By contrast, social peace, until recently, has been regarded as primarily a political matter.

Most wars have worn an expressly religious face, or at least have been assigned a religious justification.⁴ Religious wars, on the one hand, and the numerous attempted justifications of war, on the other, testify to the truth of this assertion. The European wars of the late Middle Ages and Iran's Islamic Revolution are clear examples of wars with a religious character. World War II and the American war in Vietnam can serve as examples of wars that are not explicitly religious but nevertheless have a religious character: they were not wars of conquest, nor were they waged only for economic purposes. They were inspired by a sort of religious *ethos*: the rescue of Civilization, Freedom, Democracy, all with capital letters. The Spanish Civil War, on the one side, bore the name of "crusade," and on the other side, at least in the beginning, had a markedly antireligious character, concretely, against the institutional Catholic Church. The Persian Gulf War, which may have been rather a war of economics and political domination, saw itself to a large extent justified, by both sides, in terms of religious motives, and with theistic language in both cases.

We adduce these recent Western historical examples because, in other traditions, in which there is no explicit separation of the religious and the political dimensions, any war is civil and religious at the same time. Those who undertake religious wars nearly always appeal to the name of God or say that they are carrying out God's will; they justify themselves in terms of the defense of a particular religious confession, and, in general, try to show that the war in question is being waged for a religious cause.

In the case of nonreligious wars, an immediate political reason is given, but in the background, generally speaking, a transcendent—that is, religious—motive lurks. Hitler wanted to get rid of the Judeo-Christian God of the West, and thereby to put a new stamp on the world. The Allies wished to defend their sacrosanct rights to liberty, independence, and identity. Even Jean-Paul Sartre wrote on religious subjects when he was in the French Resistance. The United States regards itself as the successor to the chosen people of the Old Testament, defending democracy and freedom in the name of God, saving the world from false Gods.⁵

From time immemorial, religious institutions have blessed military undertakings. And the military commanders have desired, in their turn, to receive the blessings of the respective religious institutions. YHWH is the "Lord of Hosts," though these be heavenly armies. To limit ourselves to the West, the pope crowned not only Charlemagne and Charles V, but Napoleon as well. The Catholic Church supported Francisco Franco's civil war. Peace treaties were usually drawn up in the name of God. For centuries, the usual formula in the West was, *In nomine sanctae et indivisae Trinitatis* (In the Name of the Holy and Undivided Trinity). The Peace Treaty of Westphalia, in 1648, claimed to guarantee, in its first article, *pax Christiana universalis perpetua* (perpetual, universal Christian peace).

⁴ Cf., for example, F. Schwally, *Semitische Kriegsaltertümer* (Leipzig, 1901), and the sequel to this work by H. H. Schmid, *Altorientalische Welt in der alttestamentlichen Theologie* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1974), esp. in the chapter "Heiliger Krieg und Gottesfrieden im Alten Testament," 91–120.

⁵ See Galtung, *United States Foreign Policy: A Manifest Theology* (La Jolla: University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, 1987), which begins with a quotation from US president Taft. In 1912, the president justified his intervention in Mexico with the statement that the government of that nation should understand that "There is a God in Israel [Ed. note: a biblical wish], and He is on duty." Since then, all of the presidents have used a similar language.

A treaty of peace means the end of a war. But it is actually still part of the war, not of the peace.

In a word, war is a religious problem, although, on the other hand, religious awareness can declare itself against war.⁶ And indeed, the first conscientious objections to modern military service were religious objections. The theological disputes that arose in sixteenth-century Spain over whether to justify or condemn the conquest of America constitute a noteworthy example of the theological problem of war.⁷

There are also ethnic wars, naturally. But even these, very frequently, are of a religious nature: the tribe itself attempted to justify its warlike acts by means of an appeal to religious motives.⁸

The religious character of war is manifest. War is a limit situation. Man and society see themselves faced with the ultimate problems of death, life, justice, fidelity, obedience, and so forth. In a word: from the first, war has been a religious phenomenon. The Gods made war, and nearly always they wore the emblems and bore the standards of their respective religions. The oracle had to be consulted, and priests imparted their blessings. The cross and the sword were joined for centuries. "Dieu le veut" (God wills it!), "Gott mit uns" (God is with us!), "In God we trust," *Sancta Maria*—all have been war cries, used to justify it.⁹ This union between religion and politics has prevailed in Asia and Africa as well, although it is a more accentuated phenomenon in the Abrahamic religions, precisely because of the sharper distinction between the sacred and the profane. But the autonomy of the "secular arm" requires the support of sacred authority in matters of life and death.

In sum, political war too, at bottom, was religious war. Be the motives for a war economic, nationalistic, or other, religion was always to be found at the center. No prince would have dared start a war without first consulting the oracles, prophets, astrologers, or priests. In some cases, and in the opinion of many people, war was like a ritual act.¹⁰

Seen from the viewpoint of the history of religions, the warrior, the *kṣatriya*, is the one who struggles with the forces of chaos in order to maintain cosmic order. The modern mystique of the military corps, living still with its music, uniforms, and parades, is a leftover of a faith like that. The warrior is the nobleman, the knight, the representative of power in the service of authority. But the authority came from God.¹¹ The warrior is the

⁶ The long-awaited pastoral letter of the US Catholic bishops on war, despite the criticisms set forth vis-à-vis their country's military policy, does not even dare condemn the possession of nuclear arms as a deterrent, despite the declarations of Vatican Council II.

⁷ See the documents collected by Juan de la Peña in *Corpus Hispanorum de pace*, vol. 9 (Madrid: CSIC, 1982), where the author describes the enormous consequences of the "Vitorian doubt." Francisco de Vitoria in fact managed to assuage the doubts of the Spanish conscience with respect to the moral rectitude of the conquest of America, and to have Charles V hand down the laws of 1542 guaranteeing the Indians all of their human rights and prohibiting the waging of war against them. See also the clear position of the same Juan de la Peña in his *De Bello contra Insulanos*.

⁸ See the classification of wars as "ethnic," "imperial," and "religious," according to S. Panunzio, "Qual è la guerra giusta?" *Metapolitica* 7, no. 2 (June 1982): 34.

⁹ See F. Heer, *Europäische Geistesgeschichte* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1953); and *Europa, madre de revoluciones*, 2 vols. (Madrid: Alianza, 1980), for overwhelming data.

¹⁰ This phenomenon can still be observed today in Papua New Guinea, where war is ritual sport. This factor, missing in modern technological wars, points to the mutation of the role of the warrior, as we indicate below.

¹¹ In so-called contemporary democracies, *authority* is vested in the people, who delegate it to their civil representatives. These in turn are, theoretically, over those who hold *military power*.

guardian of the order of the universe, the guardian of peace. The belief that a country's military personnel are its warranty for peace can still be discerned at the inmost heart of both those who oppose the pacifists and those who advocate the disappearance of the army as an institution. It is forgotten that the modern way of making war has nothing in common with the chivalry of old.¹²

This was tradition. Nowadays things have changed.

Peace as a Political Issue

Political peace, by contrast, had little in common with what is usually called "religious peace," despite the fact that there had been sporadic theoretical-religious speculation concerning peace.¹³

Generally speaking, the established religions are in agreement with the political status quo. And understandably enough: after all, they live *in* it, if not *on* it. This state of affairs was questioned only very rarely, and scarcely constituted a problem for religions. Peace consisted, simply, in the absence of war.¹⁴

Religious peace, on the other hand, was regarded more as an inner attitude, a personal tranquility, a moral strength, a condition of the soul, despite the fact that many words like *salam*, *santi*, *shalom*, *eirēnē*, *pax*, and *mir* originally had simultaneously a political and a religious meaning. These concepts well stress the integral character, spiritual and material, of human peace (by contrast with an exclusively spiritualistic or only political sense). But an awareness of the intrinsic connection between the spiritual and the material dimensions has been nearly lost in the West. And it has been weakened in the rest of the world as well, since the centuries of Europe's political sovereignty.¹⁵

The modern religious bibliography on the subject of peace speaks of it as a gift of the Holy Spirit, or as the result of some enlightenment or true vision.¹⁶

Pax aeterna is an eschatological concept, and *pax animae* is an ascetic notion.¹⁷ *Pax* also has, naturally, a moral character, and a certain social aspect, since it also means concord.¹⁸

¹² The total cost of killing an "enemy" in Julius Caesar's time was \$1. World War I had to pay \$20,000. World War II, \$115,000. And the Vietnam War cost \$300,000 per dead enemy. In World War I, 90 percent of the victims were military; in World War II, 50 percent; and in the Vietnam War, only 10 percent (90 percent of those killed were civilians). The Gulf War was even worse. Data collected by Frank Barnaby of SIPRI, Stockholm.

¹³ See K. Geyer's bibliography on "Peace in the New Testament" in G. Liedke, ed., *Frieden, Bibel, Kirche* vol. 9 (Stuttgart: Klett / Munich: Kösel, 1972), 187–99.

¹⁴ The *Encyclopedie Filosofica* (Gallarate: Centro di studi filosofici, 1979), under the entry "Pace" (peace), offers a consideration of the relations between peace and political communities, and refers to "its opposite, war." About peace, it would seem, there is not much to be said.

¹⁵ See Heer, *Europa*, 43.

¹⁶ See the beginning of the article "Pace" in the *Dizionario Encyclopedico di Spiritualità* (Rome: Studium, 1975): "State of mind sprung from the supernatural unification of all human tendencies in the direction of a single ideal, . . . the fundamental fruit of charity." And, of course, "perfect peace is impossible in this life of struggles and toils."

¹⁷ Representing an extreme position, R. Coste writes, "Human peace and the peace of Christ are two different issues, two aims, two languages" (*Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* [Paris: Beauchesne, 1983], under "Paix," col. 43). Later on, however, he will modify this extreme differentiation. The second contribution, by H. J. Sieben, treats, naturally, of *paix intérieure*.

¹⁸ See Janssen, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, vol. 2, under "Friede," 543–91.

The true religious peace is the *pax spiritualis*. The *pax temporalis*, by contrast, belongs to an inferior degree, and frequently is set in opposition to genuine peace. After all, what will it profit the rich or mighty person to possess all things, if they will have to suffer for it eternally?¹⁹

To say it another way: there is a political peace and a religious peace. The same word covers two spheres that frequently have very different echoes: the spiritual (religious) sphere and the political (secular) sphere. The latter indicates rather *securitas*, *tranquillitas*, *iustitia*, *unitas*, *concordia*, and also *utilitas*. Here it is not a matter of *pax spiritualis*, but of *pax civilis*.²⁰

One explanation for this state of affairs might be the following: political war robs people of their tranquility, and accordingly requires them to take a position with regard to the ultimate human questions. It requires that they make a religious response. On the other hand, political peace, in the best of cases, is a mere condition for the genuine internal peace of the person. True, political peace cannot be dispensed with, as it is always advantageous for the peace of the soul. But it is the latter, ultimately, that counts. Political peace is perceived simply as the *status quo*, and its maintenance is precisely the task of politicians, not that of religion.²¹ This is what was generally thought.

This state of things in the Christian West might be regarded as a reaction to the conception of peace prevailing in biblical Judaism, which was also that of the Christian Middle Ages.²²

A concern for peace usually has a special tendency to appear in times of crisis.²³ And this is indeed what is occurring at the present time.²⁴

Thesis

Our thesis consists of two parts and a corollary: (a) peace is an eminently religious affair; (b) the journey to peace requires interculturality not as an academic luxury, but as an exigency of "lese-humanity," that is what I have called "cultural disarmament"; (c) postmodernity needs a *metanoia*.

¹⁹ We could cite aphorisms of Lao-tzu, Buddha, Isaiah, Confucius, Jesus, Mohammed, and so on, in this same tenor, although they ought not to be removed from their respective contexts.

²⁰ See Janssen, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, 547ff., with examples of what we are saying.

²¹ In July 1991, Cardinal Tarancón repeated, in the summer courses of the University of Alcalá in El Escorial, that religion ought not to interfere in politics—an understandable and sound position in the recent Spanish context, provided "religion" be understood as "institutionalized Catholic Church," and "politics" as a likewise institutionalized "parliamentary game."

²² Schmid, *Altorientalische Welt in der alttestamentlichen Theologie*, 108. It may be worth rereading Deut 20.

²³ It is significant that specialized institutions, in the last decades, have started to deal with the subject of peace. To give just two examples: the title of the XXV Eucharistic Congress, held at Barcelona in 1952, was *Ipse Est Pax Nostra* [He is Our Peace (Eph 2:14)]; see the proceedings of the Congress. It was likewise the theme of the Congress of the Société Jean Bodin (see *Recueils de la Société Jean Bodin*) in 1958.

²⁴ The proliferation of institutions dedicated to the propagation and study of peace is a symptom, today, of the fact that the crisis has been acknowledged by the masses. It is also a sign of hope. Cf., e.g., J. M. Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of Peace* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1920); Institute for World Order, *Peace and World Order Studies* (New York: Transnational Academic Program, 1981); M. A. Lücker (ed.), *Den Frieden tun* (Freiburg: Herder, 1980); H. A. Pestalozzi et al., *Frieden in Deutschland* (Munich: W. Goldmann, 1982); L. Cortesi, ed., *Guerra e pace nel mondo contemporaneo* (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1985); etc.

Let us try to formulate all of this.

1. *The religious dimension.* As we have observed, political war has always come upon the scene as a religious phenomenon, while modern political peace, up until now, has not been regarded as bound up with particularly religious problems. The *pax civilis* has been ruled by other laws than the *pax spiritualis*.

The thesis of this book attempts to overcome this mortal dichotomy, and is the following: secularity, as a *novum* of our times, enables us to discover the religious dimension of political peace, without thereby falling victim to any theocracy. The *pax civilis* is the indispensable constituent of the *pax religiosa*, and vice versa. This thesis aims at overcoming dualism, but without falling into monism. It is an a-dualist thesis.²⁵

This implies that the very concept of "religion" must be purified, possibly transformed, and, of course, purged of the predominantly institutional tone of its usual Western key. It ought to denote the religious dimension of Man, which the various religious traditions express in different ways.

If someone asked me why this profound aspect of peace should be called "religious," I would adduce two reasons. *First:* because this dimension of ultimacy characterizes religion, and, in this case, is not only about an individual but a social phenomenon. It is a question of life or death not only for the individual but for society as well.²⁶ *Second:* because religions, despite the many encrustations that time, routine, and power have deposited on them, continue to function as the junction for a new restructuration of this dimension. The fact that religion must not be confused with an institution in no way militates against the appropriateness, and even, at times, the necessity, of institutions for human life.

2. *Cultural disarmament.* By this somewhat mordant expression, we refer to the necessary interculturality of a serious effort for peace. Not only is peace not the monopoly of any determinate culture—although there are more or less "combative" cultures—but the very concept of peace is not univocal. It has distinct meanings according to the various cultures. This is what we meant by saying that peace is a symbol rather than a concept.

The expression "cultural disarmament" refers in a special way to the predominant culture, which has a scientific and technological character, and is of European origin.²⁷ It is not a

²⁵ See my "Religion ou Politique?", in M. M. Olivetti, ed., *Archivio di Filosofia* (Rome: Istituto di Studi Filosofici, 1978), 73–82.

²⁶ It is usually left out of consideration in statistical studies on poverty and so-called underdevelopment that the "developed" model cannot serve as a model on a world scale. If the whole world had the same number of ears or consumed the same quantity of paper or electricity as the developed countries, life on the planet would be ecologically impossible beyond the twenty-first century, speaking very optimistically. The average citizen of a "developed" country consumes fifty times as much energy as one of a moderately developed country. The arithmetic is easy: the Earth cannot offer all this.

²⁷ I recall the reaction of one of my most illustrious audiences, in Delhi in 1989, at one of my Ganguly Lectures, whose title was precisely "Cultural Disarmament." India's neo-converts to modern technoscience as a panacea for all maladies, especially economic ones, did not receive my thesis with enthusiasm. It seemed to them at least inopportune (and I agreed with them, from "their" viewpoint). The more "traditional" members of my audience observed that what classical Indic culture lacked was precisely the capability of reinforcement, and there were even those who championed the need to be armed against the cultural genocide they were undergoing (and I agreed with them as well, on condition that the reinvigoration in question could not be implemented by following the rules of the game of the dominant culture, and much less so by the exercise of violence).

matter of depriving of their vitality the other cultures, which, generally speaking, suffer from an inferiority complex often accompanied by a real inferiority (although, of course, the latter concept is relative to a determinate scale of values).

By "cultural disarmament" I understand the abandonment of the "trenches" in which "modern" culture, of Western origin, has dug in to defend its "acquired rights" and "nonnegotiable values" such as progress, technology, science, democracy, and the world market, not to mention the governmental organizations. It is easy to see, then, that the expression is not malapropos. Disarmament makes people vulnerable, therefore it must be accomplished gradually; but it is a necessary condition for the establishment of a dialogue on an equal footing with the other cultures of the Earth. One must realize that dialogue, which raises so many expectations, is utterly impossible without starting from conditions of equality. Indeed, it is insulting to speak of dialogue to someone who is starving to death, or has been stripped of all human dignity, or who does not even know what we are talking about because his or her suffering or difference in culture generates an incapacity for doing so.

It will be well to insist on this point. By cultural disarmament, or "the disarmament of modern culture," I mean to allude to a radical change in the predominant myth of contemporary humanity—of that part of humanity that is most vociferous, influential, and wealthy, and is in control of the destinies of politics. This is not a task for journalists, and not even for historians. Our frame of reference is not the politics reflected in the media, nor even historical awareness, since what is at stake is the very myth of History.²⁸ It might seem that what I propose is a utopia. Perhaps. But aside from its value as a utopia, in this case one must reflect that the alternative is the human and planetary catastrophe.²⁹ In saying that we refer preferentially to the predominant culture, we mean to indicate that cultural disarmament also refers to the cultural project of the historical Man, as we shall see below. Today is surely not the first time that peace has been threatened.

Cultural disarmament calls for the abandonment of evolutionism as a mind-set that goes far beyond "scientific evolutionism." Evolutionism as a way of thinking implies, on one hand, the belief that a knowledge of the chronological genesis of a fact is synonymous with its intelligibility. On the other hand, it implies that the history of humanity, despite its manifold meanderings, has followed a linear evolution. And I say "history" because we are not questioning here a possible human evolution from Paleolithic to Neolithic, but the historical (and not prehistoric) evolution in which an evolutionary line seems to appear, from the Babylonians, Egyptians, Chinese, and Indians, through the Greeks, Romans, medieval peoples, modern Man, peaking in contemporary *homo technologicus*, to whom our thesis of cultural disarmament is being applied.

"The truth will make you free," it is written.³⁰ What actually happens is that truth makes us victorious. We are, in fact, accustomed to using reason as a weapon and truth as a servant (or slave—therefore not free) of reason.

²⁸ See Panikkar, 1983/11, *The End of History*, now in Volume XII of this *Opera Omnia*.

²⁹ The plenary meetings of the Global Forum for Human Survival (Oxford 1988 and Moscow 1991), which were attended by representatives of nearly every current culture, to the stupefaction of so many, expressed the practically unanimous opinion that, if the world continues along its present, modern path, it has no more than fifty years to live. See A. Vittachi, *Earth Conference One: Sharing a Vision for One Planet* (Boston: Shambhala, 1989).

³⁰ Jn 8:2.

The "sin" is threefold:

1. Using the truth as a tool in our service, and not the other way around.
2. Using it as a weapon to conquer, or sometimes just to convince. Truth is not a weapon with which to defeat, dominate, or overcome. Truth does not empower—even though it confers authority. Those who are in truth are vulnerable because, since they do not feel the need for protection, they have nothing with which to defend themselves. In a certain way, those who are in truth embrace and welcome those who think differently, since in every opinion there is an element of truth, and if someone upholds an opinion that to us appears false, it means that he is living mainly by that element of truth.
3. Not cherishing the truth as a realm of freedom or, more precisely, as a liberating force; feeling enslaved and constrained by freedom. Truth is not imposed on anyone, much less can we impose it on ourselves. Sincerity, accuracy, and even consistency are required of each of us, but truth is not. Truth is relationship, and this relationship always has a twofold meaning: the affirmation itself and what it means to me. When truth is used as victory, it ceases to be truth and becomes ideology.

When the "classic" missionary rejoices because "Christian truth" has triumphed over "pagan error," this Christian truth is such only if the convert feels free within it (because he has experienced grace), and it ceases to be truth if it is experienced as the conclusion of a syllogism or the imposition of a system of fashion or thought, however superior it may be considered.

3. *Corollary: Demythologization.* If we are sincere in our "intercultural dialogue," and not merely tolerating other cultures as "folklore" for our entertainment and the solace of those who cannot attain to our degree of "development"; if we consider other cultures on a plane of equality, however relative, then we can no longer regard the "modern myth" as the necessary condition for dialogue and the fecundation of cultures, or for the attainment of a lasting peace for humanity, some 70 percent of whom live in conditions of concrete inferiority.³¹

It is not a matter, then, of seeking a "sustainable development."³² It is a matter, rather, of subjecting to a critique the very notion of "development" as a cultural invariant.³³ It is not a matter of "adequate technological comfort," but of a critique of current technoscience.³⁴ By "critique" we do not mean "destruction" nor "reform," but the subjection of the myths of this culture to an intellectual demythologization. It is a hopeful sign that the number of voices that now reject the very idea of "development" as cultural colonialism is on the rise.³⁵

³¹ According to the World Bank's *Bulletin on World Development* (1990), there are 1.6 billion poor in the world, living on less than 18 Euros a month. At the same time, many of the governments of such countries spend veritable fortunes in the purchase of weaponry: in 1987, India, \$3.2 billion; Afghanistan, \$1.3 billion; and Angola, \$1.6 billion, again according to the World Bank. For an analysis of these and other data, see *Exodo* (Madrid), May–June 1991, 6ff.

³² See, by way of an informative example, G. Nebbia, *Lo sviluppo sostenibile* (Florence: San Domenico di Fiesole, Edizioni Cultura della Pace 1991), with its appended anthology. See also F. Perroux, *A New Concept of Development: Basic Tenets* (London: Croom Helm / Paris: UNESCO, 1983).

³³ The colloquiums held under the auspices of UNESCO (See *Cultural Development: Some Regional Experiences* in 1981; *Stratégies du développement endogène* in 1984) start to reveal cracks in the monolithic bloc of development, although some still try to salvage the concept.

³⁴ See J. Ladrière, *The Challenge Presented to Cultures by Science and Technology* (Paris: UNESCO, 1977).

³⁵ A. Birou and P. M. Henry, *Pour un autre développement* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de

Now, nothing can be done monoculturally.³⁶ No one is fully aware of one's own myth. In order to recognize our own myth, we need the contribution of other cultures. And to this end we must see our neighbor not only as *aliud* but as *alter*—not simply as an object of observation or cognition, but as another source of intelligibility, and a subject who is independent of our categories. This is the basis of pluralism. Dialogue is necessary for pluralism; but dialogue, as we have said, cannot be realized without the cultural disarmament.

As we indicate below, this requires the demythologization of modern science, both as a universal science and as the matrix in which the fecundation of which we are speaking must be realized. "Disarmament" does not mean the negation of our own values, but the nonutilization of those values as weapons for invasion, with the excuse that it is the natives themselves who seek entry into the Technocratic Club.

We must be aware, furthermore, that this most needed demythologization is, as a matter of fact, a remythologization.³⁷ We cannot eliminate myth. What we are doing is adopting another myth that seems to be more adequate for an understanding of the new situation—hence the senselessness of absolutism. We are all dependent on the myth that envelops us, in which we obtain a certain understanding of our place in the world.

Preliminary Notes

Sociology of Knowledge

Discussions on peace are old, but in the contemporary age they have raised a new interest and taken on new aspects. The situation is clear, and so is the philosophical reflection. Human knowledge too is situated in time and space.

The whole of humanity has never lived under a threat as universal as is the current menace. The coordinates of peace have changed.³⁸ It goes without saying that the framework of our considerations is not the Spanish or the European situation, but the world situation. Nor let us forget that the paradox I have dared formulate as a law prevailing in the current situation constantly receives further confirmation: that to all progress on the microsociological level there corresponds a regress in the macrosociological order. In a closed system, the growth of wealth on one side is counterbalanced by poverty on the other. The reason is plain: with natural rhythms broken by acceleration, and the whole Earth transformed into a single system, only "national economies" are pushed ahead, at the expense of other economies. This also explains the phenomenon of inflation.³⁹ All this has much to do with peace.

France, 1976), do so timidly; R. Vachon, *Alternatives au développement* (Montréal: Centre Interculturel Monchanin, 1988), more explicitly; and W. Sachs, *Diccionario del desarrollo* (Lima: Pratoc, 1992), radically.

³⁶ See UNESCO, *Historia y diversidad de las culturas* (Barcelona, 1984).

³⁷ In 1961 I introduced the term *Ummymythologisierung* as an alternative to Rudolf Bultmann's well-known *Entmythologisierung*. See my "La demitologizzazione nell'incontro tra cristianesimo e induismo," in E. Castelli, ed., *Il problema della demitizzazione* (Padua: CEDAM, 1961), 243–66. Now in Volume VII of this *Opera Omnia*.

³⁸ "Social science has uncovered more knowledge about war than about peace, just as psychology probably has yielded more insights into negative deviance (such as mental illness) than into positive deviance (such as creativity)." Thus begins J. Galtung's entry on "Peace" in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (1968).

³⁹ See K. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Boston: Beacon, 1957); R. L. Heilbrunner, *An Inquiry into the Human Prospect* (New York: Norton, 1974); A. López de Romaña, "The Autonomous Economy," *Intercultura* 104, no. 3–4 (1989): 2–169; M. Rahnema, "Global Poverty: A Pauperizing Myth," *Intercultura* 24, no. 2–3 (1991).

The *pax civilis* is not only threatened by tyrants, dictators, emperors, or demagogues of every type. These have always existed, after all. But in past times it was possible to discover the true or supposed cause of the disorder, and to fight it.⁴⁰ Today, peace is threatened by the System itself. The anonymity of the System, and the absence of a viable alternative, make the threat more dangerous. Modern Man feels threatened by external circumstances. We need only consider the prevailing human inequalities, the frightful injustices, or individual, social, and political insecurity: all things that have surely not improved in the last thirty years.⁴¹ We need only think of economic instability, the arms race, and so forth.⁴²

Man is also threatened from within. The work ethos of modern Man—that is, the ideology of labor—and the type of society imposed by the current technocratic complex leave neither time nor space for peace.⁴³ Consumerism, competition, a craving for notoriety, the need for growth (either grow or go bankrupt), the cult of novelty, the information bombardment that overwhelms our very perception, let alone our assimilation, may be keywords here for describing our current state, which does not permit peace, although everything comes wrapped in euphemisms (like "free competition"). In sum, peace has become problematic precisely because it has become unstable and dubious. It is thought impossible to find a way out of this situation. How can we go backward? Neither would the problems be solved if the Americans, or whoever else, dominated the world. The problem goes far deeper than that.⁴⁴ It is no coincidence that, with the elimination of the Russian counterpoise, the world has seen the most sophisticated war and the largest number of verbal "allies" in all history.⁴⁵ In other words, the factual situation of the modern world forces us to reflect seriously on the problem, theoretical as well as practical, of peace and the means of attaining it.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Without seeking to defend drug traffic or so-called terrorism, we must say that both phenomena—for very different reasons—are seen by the defenders of the status quo as the only culprits of what could be called, rather, an anonymous, endemic, and far deeper evil. They do so not necessarily in bad faith, but because of the intrinsic need of defending themselves by shifting attention to problems that muster a greater consensus.

⁴¹ In other studies, I documented these assertions. Cf., among other sources, "Alternative(s) à la culture moderne," *Intercultura* 77: 5–25; "Cross-Cultural Economics" in *ibid.*, 26–68. See previous chapter.

⁴² The arms race in "civilized" countries, like the number of prison inmates there, pursues its ascending course (\$1.7 billion a minute in 1986). The advertising industry does not lag far behind: in 1985, in the United States alone, it spent a million dollars a minute (*Time*, May 9, 1986). The foreign debt of the most debt-ridden countries pursues its mind-boggling ascent. US foreign debt, which was in the amount of \$900 million in 1980, had risen to \$2 billion in 1985. But from the beginning of World War II until 1982, the annual military expenditures of this same nation, adjusted for population increase, rose from \$75 per capita to \$855 (according to R. L. Siward, *World Military and Social Expenditures* [Washington, DC: World Priorities, 1983]). According to Rodrigo Carazo Odio, former president of Costa Rica and president of the United Nations University of Peace, in 1983, "in the developing nations there is one soldier for every 250 inhabitants, but only one physician for every 3,700" (*Teilhard Review* 18, no. 3 [1983]: 87).

⁴³ See my "La dialéctica de la razón armada," *Concordia* 9 (1986): 68–89.

⁴⁴ Despite the efforts of journalists to emphasize the—anyway undeniable—importance of the Russian perestroika, it could be sensed from the beginning that little will have been achieved in the long run if it all was limited to a commercial and tourist-industry liberalization.

⁴⁵ Compare the difference in the reactions of the military leaderships to the resolutions of the United Nations condemning, respectively, Israel and Iraq. See the documents collected by the Tribunal contra la Guerra del Golfo, in *La Guerra del Golfo un año después* (Madrid: Nueva Utopía, 1992).

⁴⁶ It is significant that, in Adela Cortina's juicy description of an international symposium, in the chapter on contemporary ethics and the Earth powers, no one ventures to criticize the actual

It is the practical situation in which humanity finds itself that determines the problem and shapes its outline. If peace is so much spoken of today, it is because it cannot be taken for granted. The old discussion about whether peace was something natural (because Man is a kindly animal) or a cultural product needing cultivation (to be "institutionalized") has been practically forgotten in our day.⁴⁷ The contemporary problem of peace is new, and the current situation is so complicated that any considerations on what is or should be "pure nature" awakens little interest. The urgent banishes the important.

The possible destruction of the human race, or a great part of it—which, according to some, is actually probable—represents a *novum* in the history of human self-consciousness. This perspective coming from a sociology of knowledge could indeed offer a foundation for what we seek to express in this study. Concepts like the *pax perpetua* of the theologians and philosophers, or the *pax romana*, *britannica*, *Americana*, or the *pax socialista* of the politicians, have ceased to be operative notions in the greater part of the world. What now emerges is the problem of terror caused by the possibility of a bacteriological or thermonuclear destruction.⁴⁸ The atom, that is, the indivisible, is split, and with it, peace.⁴⁹

It seems no longer possible to address the problem of peace peacefully. One approaches it with anguish and trembling. How can we speak of peace in Nicaragua, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Colombia, the Balkan area, Chechnya, Cambodia, the Middle East . . . ? And many fear that the situation could grow still worse. This coefficient of danger, of threat, of not knowing what to do, of powerlessness, and at the same time of urgency must be kept in account in order to understand and appraise considerations of peace in our days. Peace is more than a merely academic problem. As long ago as 44 CE, Cicero asked Cassius, *Quod enim est, quod contra vim sine vi fieri possit?* (What is there that can be done against force without force?). To give an appropriate answer, it would be necessary, first, to introduce the subtle, delicate distinction between "force" and "violence."

Authentic theory arises from experience based on praxis. And hope, which is expressed in theory, also influences the practical situation. This is not the moment to address this problem, but in brief, Pythagoras joins *théoria*, *praxis*, and *therapeia*;⁵⁰ the *Dhammapada*⁵¹ reminds us that the word is sterile, beautiful though it be, unless one acts in accordance with it; Atiśa tells us, recalling Vimalakirti, that "theory without praxis is slavery."⁵² It was not Marx but

structures of the technocratic system. Everything is based on a search for solutions that leave the taboo of scientific-technological civilization intact. See her book *La moral del camaleón* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1991), 114–31.

⁴⁷ "The condition of peace among human beings who live next to one another is not a natural state (*status naturalis*), but rather a condition of war, that is, although not always an outbreak of hostilities, still a permanent threat of the same. It must therefore be established" (Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace* [1795]).

⁴⁸ See, among many others, J. Schell, *The Fate of the Earth* (New York: Knopf, 1982).

⁴⁹ See Jaspers's grave warning in 1958 (in his Introduction to *Die Atombombe und die Zukunft des Menschen* [Munich: Pieper, 1960]): "The threat of total annihilation impels us to reflect on the meaning of our existence. . . . We cannot understand the problem of the atom bomb if we consider it in isolation. Only when Man really understands the potential now in his hands, will he be up to dealing with it."

⁵⁰ See K. S. Guthrie, *Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library* (Grand Rapids: Phanes, 1988).

⁵¹ IV.8–9 (51–52). See also Mt 23:3.

⁵² The whole of chapter 6 of Atiśa's *Bhodi-patha-pradipa* is devoted to the relationship between theory and praxis. See R. Sherburne's translation, *A Lamp for the Path, and Commentary* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983), 130.

Francis of Assisi who said, "Tanto un uomo sa, quanto fa" (One knows as much as one does).⁵³ An authentic meditation on peace must not only be "peaceful," it must also be *pacifying*.

This manner of considering the problem of peace is decisive for a sociology of knowledge.⁵⁴ We do not think in a vacuum. The very historicity of Man inclines us to suppose that we are nearing the end of History as an absolute value—which does not mean that the end of Man is drawing near.⁵⁵ But Man as historical consciousness is approaching his end, with a nuclear catastrophe or without.⁵⁶

Intercultural Reflection

The existential urgency of the subject made me depart somewhat from the intercultural state of the question, important as it is—and so dear to my heart.

In fact, in order to speak of peace, we should take the other cultures and their respective ideas into account. The West is not alone in this world. Nor is peace an exclusively Western concept. But this would lead us too far afield, since the problem of peace is formulated in different ways in different worlds.⁵⁷ In a large part of the East, for example, either there is no separation between politics and religion, or else the two concepts head in different directions because they correspond to different categories. In order to enter into this issue, we should have to apply new categories; accordingly, the first thing we should do would be to establish these sets of categories and explain them.⁵⁸ We cannot undertake this now. However, the world situation is such that what is at stake is the "To be or not to be"—formulated centuries before Shakespeare as *astiti nāstiti*⁵⁹—which would require the collaboration of all cultures.

The solution to world problems is not to be sought within one culture, nor will it be possible to find it monocularly. Let us realize that not even the questions are the same. But the expansion of the Western system across the face of the earth bestows a character of priority on the Western state of the question. And this is all the more the case inasmuch as, for the moment, there seems to be, *de facto*, no other alternative. Therefore, we limit ourselves in this study to what I call "cultural disarmament." Only in a second phase shall we be able to introduce certain intercultural considerations.⁶⁰ For the moment, let us try to achieve a certain degree of clarity vis-à-vis the Western situation.

⁵³ *Leggenda Perugina* 74 (quoted by L. Both). See also Jn 3:2.

⁵⁴ Understanding "sociology of knowledge" in the sense it has in the superb studies by Max Scheler and collaborators in *Versuche zu einer Soziologie des Wissens* (Munich: Duncker & Humblot, 1924), followed by K. Mannheim, *Wissenssoziologie* (Rheinland: Neuwied Luchterhand, 1964) and introduced into the North American world by Berger and Luckmann (*The Social Construction of Reality* [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966]).

⁵⁵ See my "Is History the Measure of Man?," *Teilhard Review* 16, no. 1–2 (1981): 39–45. It goes without saying that this expression of mine, "the end of history," has little to do with the later interpretation *ad usum Delphini*, popularized by F. Fukuyama.

⁵⁶ Romano Guardini had already forecast this situation back in the 1940s; see his *Das Ende der Neuzeit* (1950).

⁵⁷ "The quest for peace is necessarily interdisciplinary," admits W. Huber (in Ritter, *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972], s.v. "Friedensforschung"). But it has scarcely been taken into account, much less been taken seriously, that peace is also an intercultural subject.

⁵⁸ See my course "Religion, Revolution, and Peace" at the University of California, along with my seminar on the various concepts of peace.

⁵⁹ *Katha-upaniṣad* 1.20.

⁶⁰ See my "Cross-Cultural Economics."

Definition of the Concepts

Many of the concepts that we employ in this study are charged with such diverse contents that, frequently, they become mere analogies of one another. Thus, I here indicate the sense in which I use these words.

By *politics* I understand the whole of principles, symbols, ideas, means, and activities (all of them generally, though not exclusively, crystallized in institutions) by which human beings strive to achieve the common good (*bonum commune*) of the *polis*. The common good is interpreted here as the achievement of human plenitude within social life.⁶¹

By *religion* I understand the whole of principles, symbols, ideas, means, and activities (all of them generally, though not exclusively, crystallized in institutions) by which human beings believe that they can achieve the supreme good (*sunum bonum*) of life. This supreme good is interpreted here as the achievement of maximal plenitude within the life of all Reality.

The concepts used to explain these two words actually ought to be set in quotation marks. For example, the "supreme good" may precisely consist in the discovery that there is no such thing, and that "plenitude" could be nothingness.⁶²

In the usual interpretation, the words "religion" and "politics" are understood, respectively, as the bond (*religio*, from latin *religatio*) between Man and transcendence (*religatio divina*) and the bond of human beings with one another (*religatio humana*). The former would represent the vertical dimension of human existence; the latter, the horizontal dimension. Thus, religion would constitute the area of the Sacred, the supernatural, the eternal; politics would represent the space of the profane, the natural, the temporal.

My intention in this study is to transcend the dualism belonging to the "usual" interpretation of both words.

By *peace* I understand the synthesis of three primordial experiences of Man—freedom, justice, and harmony—as I explain in the third part of this study.

The concept of peace does not indicate a passive state. The word denotes activity and dynamic relation. The famous *tranquillitas ordinis*,⁶³ which has colored the Western concept of peace since the Stoics—through Augustine—has contributed to undermine the relational and dynamic aspect implied by peace.⁶⁴ That peace has to do with security and love is abundantly attested in the history of the West.⁶⁵ Skipping later elaborations on the subject, this notion can suffice for now.

By *political peace* I understand the result of an order that makes Man's fullness possible in human society, in the *polis*.⁶⁶

By *religious peace* I understand the result of an order that makes Man's fullness possible in the whole of Reality.

⁶¹ See my "Religion ou Politique?"

⁶² For an analysis of the nine dimensions of all religions, see my *Religione e religioni* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1965), 58–147.

⁶³ See Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* XIX.13.1. See also his sentence "Human peace is ordered concord" (*ibid.*), together with its comment by Thomas Aquinas in *Summa Theol.*, II-II, q.29, a.1, ad 1.

⁶⁴ The dynamic trait of peace has not been wholly forgotten in Scholasticism. The accent falls not so much on *tranquillitas as on ordo*, which presupposes power and will.

⁶⁵ See Janssen, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, 553ff., with abundant citations.

⁶⁶ "Peace is a condition intrinsic to a system of big human groups, especially nations, in which there is no common and planned use of threats of violence": quoted in Huber in Ritter, *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, 1120. Our conception of peace could accept all of this as the point of departure for a consideration of the subject more in depth.

In these last two cases, we find peace as a condition, as space necessary for the development of human possibilities. Peace is not *identified* with human perfection here. Peace is, rather, the relationship existing among human beings that *enables* perfection, happiness, or, to use another word employed in common parlance, salvation (liberation, wholeness, fullness, *sôteria, mokṣa, nirvâna, dào*). Peace is cosmotheandric harmony.⁶⁷

The Religious Transformation of Political Peace

Tradition

Chassez la nature, elle revient au galop (Chase Nature away, back she comes at a gallop).⁶⁸ Exile Man's religious instinct to the sphere of the supernatural, the eternal, or to the private life of the individual, and you force it to return—in a hundred different, not always wholesome ways—to the agorâ of political and social life, not excluding the economic. Actually, these pages are an attempt to develop some simple consequences of a more general conception of religion and politics.⁶⁹

On one hand, an identification of religion with politics represents a monistic view of reality, by which every type of theocracy, Erastianism, and dictatorship receives its support, whether on the religious or the political side. On the other hand, a separation between politics and religion represents a dualistic view of reality, on which rest superficial anarchisms and pragmatisms of every kind. And this is as true when religion is reduced to the individual and private sector (the saving of souls for a future life) as when politics is reduced to a selection of the most effective means to the attainment of an end already fixed and no longer under discussion. Religion is more than a technique for finding the road to heaven, and politics is more than a technique for using means.

Roads to what heaven? Means to what ends? If we ask about the ends and meaning of that which is human, and consequently of the present life, it is impossible to separate religion from politics so neatly. The authentic relation between religion and politics—a relation corresponding to the nature of both, founded on the essence of Man and, in the last analysis, grounded in the very structure of Reality—is an a-dualist relation. Temporal problems are also religious ones. Considerations on the end of Man are political ones as well. Politics cannot exist in separation from religion. There is no religious act that is not also, at the same time, political. All of the great human problems of today are of a political, and at the same time, a religious nature: hunger, justice, lifestyle, pan-economic culture, capitalism, socialism, and so on. Peace constitutes a typical case and proves the truth of this assertion.

After a period of human history in which religion permeated everything indiscriminately, there came a stage of clarification and differentiation, culminating in the extreme modern individualism of the West. The religious element, according to this last conception, has to do with the "beyond," the supernatural, the divine, the transcendent, *nirvâna, pâramârthika*, eternity, and with the inscrutable interiority. The profane, on the other hand, is made up of this life, *vyâvahârîka*, the natural, the human aspects of existence, polities, the external, temporality, and so forth. Neither sphere has anything to do with the other. They must simply respect each other.

But human life does not permit this apartheid. The place where both meet is history, which is where Man's destiny plays out. But in this field, peace does not reign: war prevails

⁶⁷ See Volume VIII of this *Opera Omnia*.

⁶⁸ See Horace, *Epistles* I.10.24: *Naturam expelles furca, tamen usque recurret*.

⁶⁹ See my "Religion ou Politique?", of which the following paragraph is a summary.

instead. *Militia est hominis vita super terram.*⁷⁰ *Pax temporalis* is only *pax imperfecta*.⁷¹ In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Arjuna must hear and learn from Kṛṣṇa that the temporal order is mere appearance.⁷² The "holy indifference" of so many Eastern and Western spiritualities justifies itself by saying that, after all, there is no difference between doing one thing or doing another in the sphere of the profane. Each yields the same result. Nothing has any importance; everything is "in-different," equidistant from eternal life, which is the only true life.

The belief that earthly things had no impact on the religious destiny of Man gave religions a sovereign independence vis-à-vis profane regimes. On one hand, religions could support and bless "just wars" (and even participate in them). Disturbing a peace like political peace, which was so imperfect, had no very great importance, because it did not concern the true *pax perpetua*.⁷³ On the other hand, religions were able to detach themselves from temporal affairs and leave the ups and downs of peace to the responsibility of the politicians, to the "secular arm," as—in a revealing expression—the Tribunals of the Inquisition did. The religious sphere considered itself independent of politics, provided the latter "respected the rights" of the former. Peace as *pax civilis* was not a religious problem. For example, let Christians vote for any political party they wish; the church does not meddle in politics, provided the church is permitted to exercise its rights. But who decides what those rights are? That is why lay Christians are customarily regarded by secular governments as a kind of fifth column. Christians read in the Latin Bible, "Et [Deus] mundum tradidit dispositioni eorum."⁷⁴ Their

⁷⁰ "Man's life upon the earth is a military campaign." See Job 7:1 (Vulgate).

⁷¹ See Thomas Aquinas, according to whom "the imperfect peace we have in this world," though a "true peace," is not the same as the *pax perfecta* we will enjoy in the other life (*Summa Theol.*, II-II, q.29, a.2, ad 4).

⁷² See *BG* II, esp. 19–21.

⁷³ This has gone so far that, in 1979, on Catholic criteria, the *Encyclopedie Philosophica* could write (s.v. "War"): "War can be just or unjust, depending on whether its motive is just or unjust." And: "Today, the mighty progress of science and technology has produced such fearfully destructive means of war, that it would be utterly inappropriate, even in cases when it would be morally licit, to have recourse to war in order to avenge an offense." We should not forget, as W. Dignat recalls in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (1958, s.v. "Friedensbewegung"), that, in 1947, Cardinal Ottaviani had come out against war on the grounds that "modern war is qualitatively distinct from earlier wars." And this was actually the opinion of Pius XII. See the wonderful words of Cardinal Lercaro during Vatican Council II: "With regard to weapons of indiscriminate destructive power (especially atomic, bacteriological, and chemical weapons), the Church ought not to limit itself, as does the schema [no. 13 of *Gaudium et Spes*], to decry their potential use, but rather ought anticipate the judgment that the Lord will surely pronounce upon them at the end of human history: the possession of those weapons is a gigantic concentration of power and violence merely in itself, and confronts nations and their leaders with an extremely proximate temptation to perpetrate the gravest crimes against the whole humankind. Therefore, those weapons, merely in themselves, constitute an element of the diabolical, and are a temerarious assault against God.... Thus, the Church may not even temporarily ratify human discourse advocating the balance of terror, or even a merely provisional utility in the possession of those weapons for the immediate preservation of peace. Instead, the Church ought to tell all possessors of those weapons that it is illicit to produce or stock them, and that they have the categorical obligation to proceed, absolutely and at once, without any delay of any kind, to the simultaneous and total destruction of them all" (quoted in "La pace come testimonianza evangelica," *Cristianesimo nella storia* 4, no. 2 [October 1983]: 468–69).

As we know, the Council sought to be more "conciliatory" and did not condemn *ex profeso* the possession of atomic weapons, which led the US Catholic bishops to back down from their original condemnation (see above).

⁷⁴ Qo 3:11 in the Vulgate: God "left the world to their [men's] own struggle."

reign is not of this world.⁷⁵ But "la politique des domaines séparés," the politics of separate domains, is not feasible.

Before condemning the hypocritical practices of Christendom, we might well recall the growing governmental practice of maintaining official secret organizations (called "intelligence services" or "security services") that function with full autonomy, that is, using any and every means at the service of governments whose heads do not "stoop" to inquiring into the details of "how information is obtained." Amnesty International's denunciations are ignored. Peace bears on all of this.

That this state of affairs is still operative could be seen, for example, in the Malvinas (Falkland) Islands conflict. Although Pope John Paul II clearly and unequivocally pronounced himself in favor of peace, and even summoned the bishops of Great Britain and Argentina to Rome, the joint declarations of the two episcopates in Rome consisted merely of vague commonplace about peace; and when they returned home, both bodies defended the nationalistic positions of their respective homelands, or at any rate did not condemn them.⁷⁶ The same can be said of the behavior of religious authorities on the occasion of the Gulf War: while the pope unequivocally condemned the war, even the Italian bishops used other, much more ambiguous language.⁷⁷

These nineteenth-century distinctions still prevail in traditional circles: separation of Church and State; an "impartial" attitude on the part of the churches, which ought not to meddle in temporal matters; separation between the temporal and the eternal, between this life and afterlife, between the political lot of peoples and their religious salvation; the distinction between reason and faith, between clergy and laity, and so on. And as in so many other matters, the West delivered itself from the regime of Christendom by going to the opposite extreme.

In this respect, as it often occurred in the history of the Church, politics had one finality: to facilitate and guarantee religious freedom, in such a way that the individuals might be able to practice their piety privately. This privatization of religion went to the point that, for example, in the same Catholic Church, some priests were blessing German tanks while others blessed French cannons. And each faction could celebrate Mass for the victory of its respective people. The State should only guarantee freedom of religious practice. Today's situation in Latin America is meaningful: the churches have all the freedom they desire, so long as they do not interfere in "political" questions. The Church jurisdiction is respected to the precise extent that it holds its tongue on matters referring to the *civitas hominis*, that is, that it allows the State full liberty. Let Pius XII not meddle in Nazi affairs, nor American Christian hierarchies dare denounce the CIA!

Pax, understood here as *pax civitatis*, the guardian of security and order, is simply the office of the politicians, and ultimately of the police. Accordingly, "political peace" would not be a religious category; it would be, at the most, a useful condition. "Peace is the peace of the State," said Bodin.⁷⁸ Or to paraphrase Hobbes: "Auctoritas, non veritas facit pacem" (Authority, not truth, makes peace).⁷⁹ "Recht ist Friede" (The law is peace), wrote Fichte.⁸⁰ In none of this is there so much as a trace of religion.

⁷⁵ Jn 18:36.

⁷⁶ All of this was well documented in its time. See a clear, succinct summary in *Il Regno*, June 15, 1982, 265-66.

⁷⁷ See R. La Valle, "E Dio doverà?", *Bozza* 90 (1990): 5-38; "La pace come riforma istituzionale e politica," *Bozza* 91 (1991): 5-19.

⁷⁸ In Janssen, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, 557.

⁷⁹ Hobbes's lamentably celebrated sentence, with its Machiavellian echoes, was, "Auctoritas, non veritas facit legem" (*Leviathan* II.26).

⁸⁰ In his review of Kant's *Perpetual Peace* (quoted in Janssen, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, 568).

It ought to be clear enough that there is no question of returning to theocratic regimes, or of Christendom; it is not a matter of falling anew into heteronomy. This is not the alternative to the autonomy that we now criticize. What is to be sought is ontonomy: the constitutive relation that unites the diverse poles of one and the same reality. Time has come to stop oscillating from one extreme to the other. You don't have to throw the baby out with the bathwater.

That this state of things can no longer be supported is evident in our days. The "Age of Enlightenment" firmly believed that *die Vernunft fördert Frieden* (reason fosters peace), as Carl von Rotteck wrote in 1838.⁸¹ But both Kant's pure reason and practical reason have proved to be impotent. Factual conflicts are too real and too frequent. And theoretical problems are all too obvious. Modernity has introduced a change in mentality. We have lost rational innocence, which believed that *vivere secundum rationem* (living according to reason) came down to *vivere secundum naturam*, and that "nature," in turn, was simply *naturata* (created nature).

Three Factors of Modernity

Western modernity can be defined in many different ways, but there are three basic factors whose presence is undeniable: *technocracy*, which has now advanced so far that it has split the atom; *secularity*, which has penetrated religion itself; and the *primacy of history*, which has managed to monopolize life. The combination of these three factors has decisive consequences for our subject. It stations peace at the center of human awareness and transforms it into a religious reality of the first order, without thereby attenuating its political character.

Technocracy

As we confront this enormous problem, we must especially take account of the fact that technocracy constitutes a world in itself.⁸²

The first difficulty is terminological. When there are no adequate words to formulate a problem, that means not only that the question is difficult and delicate, but that the reality struggling to come to adequate expression has not yet wholly "reached the light of day" in the realm of a determinate culture.

My hypothesis maintains that there is a qualitative leap between *technique*, understood as the Greek *techné*, and modern *technology*. The former represents a human invariable. All peoples have *techné*, art, artifacts, the manipulation of nature, first-degree machines, the mentality of arts and crafts. Perhaps the most adequate term for this reality would be "craftsmanship," whose human space is the cultural organism: agri-culture and techni-culture. All peoples have craftsmanship; culture is craftsmanship. Modern technology, however, is the fruit of one civilization, and it bears its marks wherever it goes, even when it is the "natives" who introduce it into their respective cultures with a Trojan horse. We say something about this in the next section. Modern technology's human space is rational organization: technocracy.

As technology is sprung (albeit by mutation) from technique, the West has not changed its name—hence, the difficulty in distinguishing them; hence also the fact that both are commonly called "technology." The identification seems all the more plausible by reason of the evolutionary/progressive mentality with which the modern West has attempted to justify, consciously and unconsciously, its world domination: all is evolutionary progress, from the Stone Age to Western civilization. From fire to electricity, arrows to nuclear missiles, there

⁸¹ Quoted in Janssen, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, 569.

⁸² See my "L'émancipation de la technologie," *Interculture* 85 (1984): 22–37. It is anyway a topic I have frequently addressed.

is one linear, homogeneous evolution (with ups and downs, of course). This progress can, of course, be used for good or evil—as if good and evil were values appearing out of the blue, independently of the ideology that justifies them. As we have said, evolutionism is the mental attitude that thinks it can reach intelligibility (of a state of things) by uncovering the temporal genesis of the phenomenon in question. And so, we hear, a nuclear missile launcher is only an extension (more sophisticated, of course) of the technique of the slingshot, by accelerating the natural phenomenon of the sprouting of a seed.

We do not go into this topic here but limit ourselves to a consideration of the terminology involved. To call the former "technique" and the latter "technology" has the drawback of seeming to reduce the former to a naïve primitivism, and of excluding from the word "technology" the meaning of "the study of technique." And so I call "technology" by the name of "technocracy," based on the etymology of the word and the fact that, unlike technique, technocracy does not simply entail first-degree tools, to be wielded at the pleasure of the consumer, but requires and imposes a way of thinking, a lifestyle, and can exist only in that fourth world that I have called the "artificial," and which it would be better to call, simply, the "mechanical." Technocracy represents the step from *techné* as art, as craftsmanship, to technology as dominion, as *kratos*, as power.

Lest we interrupt our discourse, we present a certain number of considerations on technocracy from one viewpoint only: that of time. Technocracy has a time of its own, which is neither nature's nor that of the temporality (historicity) of culture. Technocracy's time is *technochrony* and is based on acceleration.⁴³ Human beings must adapt to this acceleration if they hope to survive in the technocratic world. The self-sufficiency of technocracy—which is more than applied natural science, inasmuch as it implies an entire civilization—reaches its culmination in nuclear energy, which is the unleashing, that is, the accelerated expansion, of the energy stored in the atom. This acceleration of energy creates the possibility, or even, some would say, the probability, of the extermination of the human species. That would not only depend on one or more individuals—or "supermen"—but also on the theory of probability as applied to the System itself.⁴⁴

To put it in traditional terms: suicide represents the radical negative response to the loss of all personal hope, and the temptation to suicide comports the fostering of that possibility. This individual syndrome is now converted into a collective one. Humanity itself contemplates this possibility, and the proof is that it assumes the risk. A God who permits the annihilation of the human race, the very work of His hands, becomes daily less worthy of credit,⁴⁵ but even less so does a self-destructive human race. Faith in humanity, which, for so many, had replaced faith in God, is also on the wane. Men are ceasing to believe in Man. The simple people of the West suffer, and are demoralized. How, for example, shall they ever accept a wage-adjustment policy when they know the wastefulness of the arms race? Peace, the human order, the fertility of Mother Earth, and all the rest—in sum, life and its flowering

⁴³ See my *Técnica y tiempo* (Buenos Aires: Columba, 1967).

⁴⁴ There is no 100 percent safe atomic system. Even discounting possible sabotage and war, the stockpiles of thousands of weapons and chemical and nuclear deposits on the planet threaten a catastrophe of world proportions within a couple of centuries. In terms of current statistics, which also include the human factor, before a half century we shall have a nuclear catastrophe of continental dimensions. You cannot play Prometheus *sic*-free.

⁴⁵ This was intuited by Teilhard de Chardin, who made it the ruling consideration of his thought. He therefore taught a cosmic evolution that would reach an Omega Point regardless of human folly. That means taking God and the Cosmos very seriously, but not Man, who is here reduced to an intermediate step in Evolution.

on this planet—are called into question, and not only metaphysically (Why is there Being instead of Nothingness?), but physically, sociologically, and even psychologically (Why are we squandering the Earth and destroying ourselves? Why can we not stop cooperating with the growing destruction of humanity and the planet?). Peace no longer depends on the will of God or of a certain number of persons. It is as if it were simply up in the air. It depends on nobody. Does it maybe depend on chance, or on good or bad luck?

A kind of blind fatality weighs on human beings. There is no one of whom to beg mercy—the grace of peace, as the *Rg-veda*⁸⁶ prophetically foretold. What God can we invoke? To whom can we direct our pleas? The System is anonymous. For example, everyone wants to hold down inflation (at least, simple people think that everyone does); there is no lack of goodwill; and yet, no one manages to do so. All the world asks for disarmament, but no one wants to start first. All the world wants peace, but it seems to slip through everyone's fingers. So they try to replace it with palliatives, and they wind up with drugs, or alcoholism, or depression. . . .

The belligerents of World War II have never signed a peace treaty. So the war is not over. And indeed, the 145 wars that have taken place in the world since 1945 have taken the lives of more persons than the entire Second World War. And the process goes on unstoppably. For example, in the years from 1998 to 2001, there were more than three million victims in the Democratic Republic of Congo (each month, some eighty thousand people die because of wars set off by allies of the United States, like Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi). On the other hand, in Rwanda the number of people killed in war conflicts reached three million in the period from 1990 to 2001. These tragedies, however, are hardly covered by our mass media, especially if, at the same time, the countries of the so-called First World suffer acts of violence, however few—numerically speaking—are the people involved.

I have denominated the aspect of time's domination by technocracy *technochrony*. It is the time proper to second-degree machines, to technocracy; accordingly, it is the time proper to the modern city. Therefore I have distinguished "cultural organism" (technique) from "technocratic organization." The time in question is one of acceleration.⁸⁷

Once that time is accelerated, Man sees himself forced to do anything possible to survive in the technocratic civilization. Acceleration can no longer be reduced without causing disturbances in Man, in society, in the city, and even in the Earth—all of which can now be seen teetering on the brink of out-and-out catastrophe. We need only think, for example, of the basic question of nutrition. A restoration, in the sense of a romantic return to the preindustrial, pretechnocratic age, is almost unthinkable, much less practicable. Once natural rhythms are broken, their restoration is not easy, since life's capacity for adaptation has already assimilated a great part of the arrhythmia in question. Once Man has become habituated to monocultures, pharmaceutical products, or national boundaries, their dismantling is a very delicate operation. Therefore the process must be not a negative or violent one, but one of emancipation.⁸⁸

On the other hand, if the acceleration—in this age ruled by the machine—continues to grow unabated, it will be more and more impossible to stop. Grow or die, we are told.

⁸⁶ X.121.1d, 2d, and *passim*.

⁸⁷ "The fact that acceleration as a striking historical phenomenon only comes on the scene with Christianity indicates that it stands in a direct connection with the specifically Christian understanding of time, history, and historicity," E. Benz wrote in 1978 ("Zeit, Endheit, Ewigkeit," *Eranos* 47: 18). Acceleration—he says—is a sign of the technological era and has not sprung up on Christian soil by coincidence. "Acceleration is the tragedy in the salvation history," he summarizes (21).

⁸⁸ This is the central thesis of my already mentioned study "L'émancipation de la technologie."

But there seems to be no appreciation of the fact that rampant growth means cancer, in all orders.⁸⁹

The economic example is manifest. The industrialized world lives constantly projected toward the future, in the hypothesis that growth and progress will always be possible. Capital, which has now become necessary for everything, has mortgaged this tottering future. The average American citizen has already spent three years' wages in advance, that is, has mortgaged them. In order to grow a few acres of rice "scientifically" (i.e., according to the technocratic pattern), fifteen times more unrecoverable energy must be put into them than the number of calories the finest harvest will make available from that acreage. And this "scientific" rice is sold on the (free?) market for a higher price than rice grown with natural methods. Who pays for this?

All of this has to do with peace. Peace can no longer be regarded as the preservation of the status quo: first, because this status quo is unstable; second, and mainly, because it is unjust.

This state of things could be interpreted as a kind of attenuated apocalyptic view, were it not for the fact of the second *novum* of modernity: secularity.

Secularity

Another complex, difficult question is constituted by secularity.⁹⁰ I limit myself here to defining precisely three notions: secularization, secularism, and secularity.

"Secularization" denotes the familiar process, especially in European history, of the confiscation of the properties of the church and religious institutions, with all the implications in terms of anticlericalism, deistic humanism, and so on.

"Secularism" is an ideology that asserts that religion, as a flight to transcendence, must be abolished as anachronistic, antiscientific superstition. The process of its elimination can be implemented either in a revolutionary fashion, or else gradually, by means of the State or through education.

"Secularity," on the other hand, represents the modern Man's confidence—which can perhaps be regarded as a trickle-down from various movements—in the definitive, and therefore irreducible, character of the *saeculum*.

The *saeculum* is the triad of time, space, and matter, which, in its intimate oneness with human life, constitutes an irrevocable, definitive dimension of Reality. Whatever be its relationship with transcendence, the immanence of *saeculum* is not transitory. The *saeculum* (*aión, aheu, áyus*) is the time interval, the duration, the temporal tension in which every living being, or at least the human being, lives and develops. This "space" pertains to Man's very life, and has a meaning in itself. This *saeculum*, as the space of temporality, has a reality of its own, and cannot be regarded merely as an intermediate stage along the road to eternity and the "other world." Secularity represents the overcoming of Platonism.

"Secularity" means the experience of time (at least of human time, or temporality) as an ultimate and definitive, although not the single, component of Reality. Neither is time a mere illusion, nor are time and eternity two separate forms of reality. Rather, they are two inseparable dimensions of reality, in mutual and constitutive interpenetration. Consequently, secularity is not the antithesis of sacredness. The sacred and the profane are opposites—but the secular transcends this dichotomy, and a secular affair can be as sacred as any other affair

⁸⁹ See my "Medicina y religión" (*Jano, medicina y humanidades* 31 [Madrid] [1986]: 12–48), where I suggest that the cancer of the individual micro-organism corresponds to the cancer of the social macro-organism. In Volume II of this *Opera Omnia*.

⁹⁰ See Panikkar 2000/XLIII.

conducted by the traditional religions. It is precisely secularity that delivers the ancient religions from their temptation to deny—and abandon—the world and thus lose their transcendent value for our time. Mysticism, well understood, can help us understand the a-dualist experience of *tempiternity*.⁹¹

The Myth of History

Traditional Man, in most cultures, lives not in history, but in the cosmos.⁹² His life is reflected not exclusively, or even mainly, in human history, but rather in the totality of cosmic forces. Man knows that he is a child of nature, and that he shares in nature's lot. He comes and goes, he is born and perishes. He belongs to the universe, of which only a small part regards the historical development of his human fellows. For the traditional Man, generally speaking, the sun, or the storms, or a harvest, or the luminous world (the will of God, for example), have more meaning than does the "tribe" or the "nation" in their historical sense.

By contrast, modern Man—and here is the connection with secularity and technocracy—lives in his historical environment, which constitutes the framework of his life. Each thing is dependent on its individual destiny. *Rta, physis, ordo*, and like notions are now reduced to human justice. Man is transformed into a historical being. "Reality," for him, is the same as "history," that is, what has occurred, is occurring, or will occur. History is the Real; real is what occurs (historically, to be sure). Human existence is a historical existence. "Consciousness" is to know what is happening, has happened, or will happen. What would modern life be without science—or without news? Not only is Man a historical being; nature itself is historical.⁹³

In a word, the "social order" is whatever Man has, unless he takes flight to a supernatural world or hides in his inner world. It is not a matter of little account, then, how that social order unfolds, since it forms part of Man's very life and, consequently, of his happiness. The social status quo is all that Man possesses: if that framework is unjust, imperfect, or inhumane, he cannot survive. Man depends exclusively on his history. In this sense, peace among human beings becomes a matter of ultimacy, one on which all existence depends.

For the Man of the ancient cultures, political vicissitudes did not have the ultimate, definitive character they have for the modern secular citizen. Strictly speaking, the very notion of "politics" was different. Political peace was regarded as desirable and important, but Man's salvation did not depend on it. It may be that an intermediate standpoint is closer to the reality of human existence, but the fact is that the secular Man has the sensation that his salvation is in direct relation to his situation in the *polis*. This conviction immediately transforms political peace into a religious affair. Marx's criticism of religion as an antihistorical factor, which impedes the development of Man, should be read in this key. And the Marxist oversimplification of reducing history to a class struggle for control of the rudder of history can be well understood too. But the consequences run deeper still. The binary digital system used in computers seems but a continuation, to the bitter end, of the binary system of the Marxist class struggle converted into a class logic, with the classes reduced to

⁹¹ See my studies in *Culto y secularización* (Madrid: Marova, 1979), and "El presente tempiterno," in A. Vargas-Machuca, ed., *Teología y mundo contemporáneo* (Madrid: Cristiandad, 1975), 133–75.

⁹² Doubtless we ought to refer here to M. Eliade, *Le mythe de l'éternel retour: archétypes et répétition* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949).

⁹³ Cf. works as different as those by C. F. von Weizsäcker (*Die Geschichte der Natur* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1948]) and S. Hawking (*A Brief History of Time* [Toronto: Bantam, 1988]), both beginning with the unexamined presupposition that the cosmos is a historical entity.

two: on the one end, capital and labor, capitalists and workers; on the other, the maximum abstraction, made of zero and one.

The misunderstanding—at times, veritably tragic—between the Vatican and the theology of liberation is not due solely to political factors (factors of power) and doctrinal differences. It is due as well, and more fundamentally, to different lived experiences of the myth of history.

Political Peace as a Religious Problem

We have a sample of the change in religious awareness today: peace is rediscovering its religious roots.⁹⁴ In the name of peace, not only does the study of religion plunge to further depths, but the very concept of "religion" is purified.⁹⁵ After the separation of religion and politics over the course of the last centuries, an a-dualist relationship presents itself as the only possible solution. Peace is no longer a simple *concordia civium*. The *pax civitatis* is no longer a simple *ordinata concordia*,⁹⁶ nor a mere legal or purely intramundane term having little to do with religion, nor again a *pax temporalis apparens*⁹⁷ or a *pax imperfecta*.⁹⁸ Instead, peace becomes an ultimate, and therefore directly religious, matter. The reason is plain: Man's welfare in the Earthly City is no longer a purely provisional affair. *Pax in terris* is a problem that concerns the entire being of Man as such, since his final destiny is at stake in the *civitas hominis* itself. The Earthly City is regarded no longer as simply a preparation for heaven, or as a reflection of the City of God, but as an arena in which Man's ultimate destiny is being forged. And this is the case regardless of whether afterlife is denied or affirmed.

The definitive destiny of the individual depends on what that individual has come to be in the earthly realm. Unless one has succeeded in attaining the perfection of life to which one aspires, one will remain crippled forever.⁹⁹ Religion is not a consolation for the failed. Indeed, this realm is not merely temporal, but *tempiternal*, without any need for a subsequent eternity. In other words, the political status quo is of immediate religious relevance because it has directly to do with the definitive *status hominis*. To put it in oversimplified terms: if you do not believe in afterlife, what you actualize of life on earth becomes the ultimate and the definitive—becomes a religious matter; if you do believe in afterlife, its enjoyment in heaven will depend on what you have been on earth. If the earthly is a springboard to the heavenly, then earth also acquires definitive characteristics: the *pax terrena* that has enabled my perfection acquires a religious importance as well.

To be sure, there can be no *pax* without *iustitia*. But neither can justice be split into "justification" for eternal life and "justice" for temporal existence. It is significant that the Christian concept of *dikaiosynē* shifted further and further in the direction of justification

⁹⁴ See Panikkar 1984/20, which anticipates some of the ideas expounded here.

⁹⁵ See Panikkar 1988/20.

⁹⁶ Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* XIX.12–14.

⁹⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theol.*, II, q.29, a.2.

⁹⁸ When Luther thus internalized the concept of *pax spiritualis*, "he sundered the medieval connection between spiritual and worldly peace, relegating the latter to the status of a theologically indifferent outward peace, since it was the affair not of Christians but of jurists (a key profession in the modern State)" (Janssen, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, 559; see there the respective citations from Luther).

⁹⁹ From this perspective, Pope John Paul II's obsession with abortion could be interpreted as a modern endorsement of secularity. If human fetuses went to heaven to enjoy the beatific union as perfect human beings, the pope could simply consider them among the thousands of children—and adults—who die an unnatural death every day.

(for eternal salvation) and became separated from justice (among human beings).¹⁰⁰ The history of this split in Western Christianity encapsulates the whole problem of our subject. The essence of justice consists not solely in *iustitia socialis*, nor in mere *iustificatio in vitam aeternam*, but rather in Man's authentic, complete relationship with Reality. The essence of justice consists in the harmonious realization of all Man's constitutive relations. Justice is made up of the whole ensemble of Man's relations with all of reality. Man cannot have a genuine relationship with God without at the same time entering into a harmonious relation with the cosmos, and especially with his fellows. Justice in its entirety, as a just order, is an essential ingredient of peace.

A concept that clearly reveals this mortal division, which we are trying to heal, between the religious and the political is that of "salvation" (*mokṣa*, *sôteria*, liberation, *nirvâna*). This concept, in most religions, designates Man's full freedom, and thereby also his *salus*, that is, his fullness and happiness: freedom *from* all slavery, and freedom *for* all sovereignty. This human liberation gradually dissolved into—at least—three parts: theological salvation for the future life, medical health for the psychosomatic conjunct, and political freedom for social life.

The worst consequence of all of this is not so much the specialization of the sciences as the dismemberment of Man. What liberation theology seeks to do, in the concrete context of Latin America, is a good example of what I wish to express, although this example should not be transformed into a general model: the oppressed, conscious of the absence of justice, see therein a threat to their justification. That is, in their human marginalization, they are at risk of eternal damnation. And vice versa: the powerful cannot be justified (saved) unless they comply with justice. The "bourgeois" criticism of the theology of liberation—that is, that it has degenerated into a mere naturalism and political struggle—ignores the context in which that theology was born. It has not heard the suffering cry of the poor; it has only listened to the threat to the lifestyle of the oppressors. Even temporality is the object of theological arguments.

Mere awareness—as I have written elsewhere—leads not only to rebellion but to desperation, when the oppressed see not only that they cannot deliver themselves from their oppression but that neither can they deliver their children from it. One must have lived in contact with the oppressed in order to realize that, in "becoming aware," they come to notice that at stake is not only their human happiness but also their eternal salvation. They realize that misery has destroyed them; that they are no longer capable of human reactions; that they lack the knowledge, virtues, and habits that would be necessary in order to react in a fitting manner; that, really and truly, oppression has demeaned them to the level of beasts; and that they no longer even desire their liberation, since they scarcely know what they are. They have lost the taste for life; they have been oppressed to the quick. The absence of *justice* has destroyed their capacity for *justification*. They no longer ask themselves about their own identity; they do not know about it any longer. We should proceed cautiously in glorifying the poor. The tragedy rests in the fact that marginalization attains its ends: it causes the marginalized to *degenerate*. We can thus understand that the cry of liberation theology aims at something beyond the class struggle: it is the struggle for salvation.

Something of the like ought to be said about the relation between medical salvation (health) and religious salvation, on one side, and political on the other.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ See J. M. Díez Alegria, "Gerechtigkeit," *Sacramentum Mundi* (1968), which is already a step in the direction of bridging this huge gap.

¹⁰¹ See my "La dialéctica de la razón armada," op. cit., where an attempt is made to show their intrinsic relation, as humanity has known it since the most ancient Egyptian times.

The Religion for Peace movement, born in Kyoto in 1970 and embracing some dozen religions, may, along with its forerunners, be another sign of our times.¹⁰² It was very meaningful to me, on the occasion of its foundation, to hear representatives of various religions frequently expressing themselves in direct opposition to their traditional doctrines. The struggle for human peace, that is, for a *pax civilis*, is not only a natural task, incumbent upon all of us as citizens, but also one having a certain religious priority in the current context. These voices grow louder and louder. It is instructive, for example, to hear and read interpretations of Buddhist *nirvāṇa* that set it in direct relation to believers' socioeconomic situation.¹⁰³

Another astonishing manifestation of the new religious awareness was the UNESCO Conference in Bangkok in 1979, at which representatives of eleven religions met to investigate the problem of human rights in their respective traditions. Despite divergences of philosophy and language, all participants were in agreement that sociopolitical rights were a religious matter too, even though so little attention had been paid to it in the past.¹⁰⁴

We need not recall here all the movements that have sprung up in this last decade, on religious initiatives, having the aim of showing the religious character of peace, and of defending at least a relative pacifism.¹⁰⁵ Let us cite only the Pax Christi movement, which is adopting more and more courageous positions.¹⁰⁶ It becomes ever more frankly understandable why a Christian conscience should be incompatible with a collaboration with war industries and military power.¹⁰⁷

Another example would be John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, whose very title is instructive. The Roman pontiff does not speak of *pax in coelis*, but of earthly peace, to which he ascribes a religious transcendence. The encyclical accepts the sacredness of the secular sphere, in the sense of "secularity" described earlier.¹⁰⁸

* * *

If the human situation in the world has a religious meaning, that is, if it signifies something ultimate, then it is not without importance that Man should achieve the full development of his material or cultural, physical or economic life. This "full" refers, obviously, to each individual: it is a *relative* fullness, without an absolute sense. But it does not, for all that, fail to signify that salvation for human beings refers not only to their transcendent realization but also to their individual welfare, their family life, their social existence, and their creative activity in all spheres.

¹⁰² See Lücker, *Das Frieden tun*, op. cit.; see also the periodical *Dharma World*, and so many others.

¹⁰³ See the summary of the statements of the Asian branch of this association in *Peace through Religion*, 1976, with contributions of the principal religions of the continent, although in the absence of the so-called archaic or primitive ones.

¹⁰⁴ See the Final Document in UNESCO Documentation SS-79/Conf. 607/10, February 6, 1980.

¹⁰⁵ See K. Holl, "Pazifismus," *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* 4 (1987): 767-87.

¹⁰⁶ See the quarterly *Pax Christi International Bulletin*, for example, no. 41 (August 15, 1982).

¹⁰⁷ See the discussion with the Russian Orthodox Church at Zagorsk (March 1-21, 1982), and the various demonstrations against nuclear weapons, frequently regarded as an offense to God and immoral in themselves.

¹⁰⁸ The Italian publisher Edizioni Cultura della Pace of San Domenico di Fiesole, Florence, has published some thirty volumes since 1989, which now make up an entire *Encyclopedie della Pace* [Encyclopedia of peace]. This enormous task was undertaken on the initiative of Ernesto Balducci, who died in a car accident in 1992, of whom I wish to express my admiration and esteem. See also *Papeles para la Paz*, a journal published by Madrid's Centro de Investigación para la Paz, etc.

In a word, happiness, the *beatitudo* of the Christian tradition, or India's *ananda*, is not merely a beatitude to be experienced in some future life. Rather, it is a *tempiternal* happiness, not exhausted in temporality, but neither located outside it. Eternal life is reflected in temporality. The real, concrete existence of human life is a *tempiternal* existence.

It is readily understandable, then, that, in this earthly peace, the ultimate, eternal destiny of Man should be reflected. If human existence has not been perfected to the extent that it could have been—or rather, should have been—then this failure, like an abortion, like a permanent hole, leaves a mark in reality: in Christian tradition, this has been called “hell,” and there is no returning from it. Earthly failure is heavenly failure. So in heaven as on earth. Man's responsibility is little short of infinite, by virtue of the fact that human worth is an end in itself.

When, more than sixty years ago, we heard of the dangers of the atomic bomb, our first reaction was concern and indignation. But the later reaction, from many representatives of the dualistic spirituality I have often been criticizing, was, in effect, “So what? Don't we know we are mortal? And not only as individuals, but as cultures, too, and as peoples? Aren't we aware that the solar system has already lived out half of its possible existence? What essential difference can there be between whether the world lasts only another hundred years or four-and-one-half thousand million years? Isn't this the law of life? What is all this in comparison with eternity? Man's eternal element cannot be threatened or eliminated as easily as that.”

But when the eternal element in Man does not come *after* the temporal—since the two are inseparable—then all of those lives that have not been realized in time (*ayus, saeculum*) will likewise fail to find consolation in that religiousness of patience and compensation “beyond this world” that have proved so useful for the exploitation of others. Human life on earth is a game of life and death. The worth of the person is neither manipulable nor transferable.

“Woe to those who oppress [scandalize] others,” the Gospel tells us. And the curse is terrifying: “It would have been better for them to have been drowned in the depths of the sea.”¹⁰⁹

When the *kurukṣetra* (battlefield) is at the same time the *dharmakṣetra* (dharma-field),¹¹⁰ that is, when the historical destiny finds itself inextricably interlaced with the final destiny of the person, when the salvation of the soul alone loses its meaning, then humanity's political, historical, and collective situation is no longer a secondary factor. Not that only the temporal, the bodily, the sociopolitical exist; but neither do the eternal, the spiritual, the theoretical without it. Reality is indivisible.

There are not *two* Cities. The *homo religiosus* of our day no longer wants to be a citizen of two States. “No one can serve two masters.”¹¹¹ It follows immediately that the citizenship of the religious Man cannot be satisfied with the modern megalopolis, which is built on the basis of a time and space reduced to mathematical abstractions.

“On earth as it is in heaven,” that's true; but it is also true that “whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven”;¹¹² whatever happens (whatever you bind) on earth will also be realized (bound) in heaven. That is to say: *So in heaven as on earth*. Heaven and earth meet—indeed, merge—at the horizon. Only that horizon is not merely in the future, nor simply in the *eschaton*, but is in the *here and now*, which are much more than mere spatio-temporal categories. Presence is *parousia*.

¹⁰⁹ Mt 18:6–7.

¹¹⁰ See *Bhagavad-gītā* I.1.

¹¹¹ Mt 6:24.

¹¹² Mt 16:19.

God's peace and the world's peace can be neither identified nor separated. Their relation is a-dualist. There is no posttemporal eternity, nor any pre-eternal temporality. Reality is temporality.

In this sense, a peace that would afford security only to a few individuals, or that would offer a certain stability to only a few States, would be that peace that Catholic tradition has sometimes called a *pax imperata* or *pax violenta*. It would be a false *pax*—or a *mala pax* (bad, evil peace), as St. Augustine called it long ago—since it would not fulfill the condition laid down by the Christian tradition: *principium autem pacis est, ad finem aeternum dirigere subditos* (the first principle of peace is to direct subjects to their eternal end).

The novelty of secularity consists in this, that that *finis aeternus* is not shifted or postponed to a life sovereignly independent of the earthly, in a heavenly "beyond," but is realized precisely at the confluence of both currents of reality. This is the crossroads of the Cross, and the meaning of the Incarnation. In any authentically religious horizon, heaven stoops to earth, and earth mounts to heaven. In other words, human existence itself is not only earthly but divine as well, not only spiritual but bodily as well, not only eternal but temporal as well. And all of this in a plenitude without either confusion or separation: this is the a-dualist (and Chalcedonian,¹¹³ we might add, for Christians) relation.

All of this must not be interpreted as if it denied transcendence or the Mystery. We defend no superficial humanism.¹¹⁴ True peace is not only temporal, nor does it consist in a purely eschatological eternity. It is neither spiritual and interior alone, nor political and social alone. We should not identify political peace with religious peace, as if the political dimension were identical with the religious. And much less should we identify religious peace with political peace. The function of religion is not only social: "Not on bread alone is Man to live."¹¹⁵ Human peace is not attained by exclusively satisfying the needs of the "rational animal," as if Man were but an ensemble of needs. Rather, it is a matter of overcoming the dichotomy between politics and religion, although without identifying them with each other. Actually there is no such thing as a peace that is purely political or purely religious. Human peace is political and religious at the same time—and this, precisely because it is human, and Man is a whole.

Christians should have no great difficulty in accepting this when they consider that the Incarnation is not the exclusive privilege of the Son of Man; or if, following their own tradition, they believe in the *theosis* (divinization) of the human being, the doctrine that all the "children of Man" are called to be children of God.¹¹⁶

The celebrated "correspondences" in the *Upanisads* come down to the same thing. A mutual relationship exists between each and every person, considered as a microcosm, and the totality of the universe as macrocosm.¹¹⁷ Or, as modern physics has rediscovered, every elementary particle is actually a kind of field (magnetic, electrical, gravitational, atomic) in which every point is a function of all the others, and in some sense a reflection of the totality of the field. Here we should refer to all of the modern works on *Gestalt*, holism, holograms,

¹¹³ The Council of Chalcedon defined that Christ, the prototype of all reality, was one with the Divinity, without confusion or mutation, indivisibly and inseparably (*Denzinger*, 302).

¹¹⁴ See my *Humanismo y Cruz* (Madrid: Rialp, 1963), esp. chapter 5. In Volume II, Part 2 of this *Opera Omnia*.

¹¹⁵ Mt 4:4.

¹¹⁶ See such passages in the New Testament as Jn 1:12; Gal 3:26; Eph 1:5.

¹¹⁷ See Nicholas of Cusa's marvelous response in the following note.

and so forth. Actually, this is the ancient idea of the *triloka*, or theory of the three worlds, alive in the East and West.¹¹⁸

What I would like to emphasize now is the mutual influence between Man and the World, with reference to peace. Each human being, when in his or her proper place and not alienated, reflects the harmony of the universe. Thus, the cosmic harmony depends on the inner harmony of every being. But an inward peace that were to be merely a private *pax spiritualis* would not really be peace. Peace is not a parcel of private property. Peace is not only spiritual but bodily and social as well. Each of the two elements contributes in both directions (indeed, in the endless directions of all beings) to the creation and preservation, as well as to the destruction, of the peace of the universe. What in Jewish and Christian spiritualities are known as "vicarious vocations," whether for suffering, prayer, or action, correspond in the Buddhist or Hindu context to *karman* and its micro- and macrocosmic equivalents. A saint inspired by love can surely do more for peace than an activist ruled by hatred.

To summarize: we have seen that the nuclear threat, the ecological situation, and social injustice have made Modern Man aware of the fact that the *status quo* is not peaceful. Accordingly, peace cannot mean the preservation of that *status quo*. Secularity or the secular mentality, for its part, makes us conscious that the *fluxus quo* is a religious task, and consequently one that impels us to pursue it. The combination of these two experiences thrusts us toward a change with regard to the human attitude toward peace. Religious peace and political peace intermingle. And this, not because either disappears into the other, but because a concrete separation between these two human spheres can no longer be maintained.

Peace, then, is neither the *status quo* nor the *fluxus quo*, but rather the mediation between them—that is, a kind of constant state of reconciliation. This does not mean that changes and revolutions are to be excluded.¹¹⁹ This is the sore point, the point where the difficulty of peace stands to the fore. The step from *status quo* to *fluxus quo* must anyway be peaceful. Violence (not force) is to be excluded—understanding by "violence" the violation of the person, or more broadly, the violation of the dignity of any being. Man has known since prehistoric times that it is more painful to extract an arrow than to drive it deeper. If the social body today is wounded by many arrows, there is nothing to be done but to withdraw them—and that is no easy task. This step from political peace to religious peace reveals the place at which the tension between religion and politics becomes most visible.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ "We can affirm that the world is threefold: the smallest one, that is Man; the greatest, that is God; and the big one, that is called the universe. The smallest one is in the likeness of the big one; the big one, of the greatest" (Nicholas of Cusa, *De ludo globi*).

¹¹⁹ See my essay "Philosophy and Revolution," *Philosophy East and West* 23, no. 3 (1973): 315–22, which shows the Western cultural origin of the concept of "revolution." A certain antecedent philosophy is required even for the word to have meaning. In Volume X, Part 2 of this *Opera Omnia*.

¹²⁰ We recall the attitude of some US Catholic bishops who, in 1982, refused to pay a portion of their taxes calculated to correspond to arms expenditures, thus disobeying a civil law. See the growing conviction, in Christian circles, that nuclear weapons are immoral. See also the second version of the pastoral letter of the US bishops on peace, dated October 26, 1982: "We have judged immoral even the threat to use [nuclear] weapons." But they did not want to go to extremes, and the paragraph continues, "At the same time we have held that the possession of nuclear weapons may be tolerated as deterrents while meaningful efforts are under way to achieve multilateral disarmament." The contradiction is immediately evident. Is not deterrence already a threat? "If the threat is immoral, how can the possession not be? Is not the possession the threat?" asks Arthur Jones, writing in the *National Catholic Reporter* (October 29, 1982). See further, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (October 23, 1982), 12, on the controversy over similar topics in the Anglican Church.

While a "realistic" political attitude is directed toward the attainment of peace—if always in terms of a conception based on the ancient principle, *Si vis pacem, para bellum* (If you would have peace, prepare for war)¹²¹—a genuinely religious posture asserts the vulnerability inherent in any authentic attitude on behalf of peace.¹²² Concretely, disarmament projects have been mounted for some decades now. But they have met with no success, because their advocates have been laboring under an internal contradiction: trying to create peace while preserving the status quo.¹²³ Only in a true religious attitude do we find sufficient strength and responsibility to create a peace relatively free of conditions. The contrary attitude stimulates the coining of slogans like, "Better dead than red," "My country, right or wrong," and similar catchphrases, which leave no room for dialogue.¹²⁴

For example, a religious attitude can decide in favor of unilateral disarmament, albeit a gradual one.¹²⁵ The religious attitude enables one to refuse to absolutize the "enemy." Thus, in the face of a threat of invasion by foreign troops, one can always discover that the loss of national liberty, for example, is not an "absolute evil." The Spanish Civil War and World War II would offer us important considerations in this respect. Perhaps it would have been better not to resist with weapons. Peace is antiwar.

A peace achieved under conditions imposed by only one of the parties is called "victory," not peace. Peace has an inner, religious substance; otherwise it is not peace. The world peace will not consist in the victory of one ideology alone—*ours*. Paradoxically, religion relativizes the demands of politics. A genuine religious spirit can attain to a certain human perfection even under a dictatorship or an unjust system. And this will leave one's hands free to transform oppressive systems into something more humane.

¹²¹ The adage dates from Flavius Vegetius Renatus, *Epitome Rei Militaris*, book 3, Prologue: *Qui desiderat pacem, praepared bellum* [Let them who want peace prepare everything for war].

¹²² See the European meeting of Catholic intellectuals (MICC Pax Romana) in Rome, September 11–14, 1982, with its express opposition to the acceptance of the principle, *si vis pacem, para bellum*.

¹²³ The entire justification of the Gulf War was based on the defense of the status quo of 1990, ignoring the history of the Middle East—not only of the past century, but since World War I.

¹²⁴ See my *Patriotismo y cristiandad* (Madrid: Rialp, 1961), against nationalism and in favor of the "love of one's own country" in the ancient Christian sense.

¹²⁵ Cf., e.g., P. P. Everts, "Reviving Unilateralism," *Bulletin of Peace—Proposals* 11, no. 1 (1980): 40–56; D. Sölle, "Unilaterally for Peace," *Cross Currents* 33, no. 2 (1983): 140–46.

CULTURAL DISARMAMENT AS A REQUIREMENT FOR PEACE

*Maioris est gloriae ipsa bella verbo occidere
quam homines ferro;
et acquirere vel obtinere pacem pace, non bello.*

*It is more glorious a thing to slay wars with the word
than human beings with the sword;
and to win or keep peace with peace than with war.*

Augustine, Letter to Darius 229.2

Augustine writes this letter in his old age, a few years before his death, to the imperial envoy who is about to restore peace with the sword.

Peace would seem to belong to the realm of the unattainable. But the art of human life consists precisely in challenging the seemingly impossible. The more difficult attaining anything seems to us to be, the greater the incentive to reach it for that being who, as being human, participates in the creative act and who, therefore, has a thirst for the infinite. When parents simply tell their young children, "No, you can't have the moon," instead of pointing to a more real and more difficult Moon than the one that they would like to have, they quench the human creativity that nestles in the breast of every little child. Peace is not an adolescent's moon, it is the authentic moon of the Man who has not allowed anyone to reduce—or seduce—him to the condition of a mere dreamer of something beyond the clouds, or to a simple calculator of the age of the firmament.

The subject of peace is a challenge to logic and to history. But neither logic nor history constitutes the whole of reality.

Peace is not possible without disarmament. But the required disarmament is not only nuclear, military, or economic. There is also need for a cultural disarmament, a disarmament of the dominant culture, which threatens to become a monoculture capable of engulfing all other cultures and finally drowning along with them. Traveling through space up to the Moon or settling on Mars, besides being an alienation of Man's earthly body, would provide but a temporary refuge. Man is more than a bacterium, which seeks merely to reproduce. Modern Man feels himself the prisoner of this Earth as some of his forebears felt themselves prisoners of their bodies, from which they only wished to escape. The "transfer" is significant

and ironic: we no longer wish to go to heaven, but we do desire to go to the Moon or other planets. They no longer believe in the starry vault of heaven, but they still believe in the stars as their heaven. Man was ill at ease in his body when he thought of it as just an envelope; now he feels uneasy on the Earth insofar as he thinks of Earth as a simple apartment. And as once upon a time a bodily alienation reigned, now an earthly alienation is the order of the day. The consequences are our ecological disasters: hence my cry for an *ecosophy*.

It is absolutely evident that military disarmament is impossible without cultural disarmament. Within the prevailing cultural parameters, military disarmament looks to be an improbable folly. If only a balance of weaponry maintains peace, then if one side disarms, the other will take advantage of it. Unless we keep making "progress" in the invention and development of deadly weapons, others will do so, and the balance will be thrown off. One must see who builds the biggest stockpile.

I divide the topic into three parts, each of which is presented under three points. The first part deals with peace; the second, with the obstacles in the way of peace; and the third, with how it is to be acquired. But none of them consist of recipes.

What Is Peace?

The Unifying Myth

Peace today constitutes one of the few positive symbols having meaning for the whole of humanity. Peace is the most universal unifying symbol. It is one of the few symbols to which the human race responds positively. God, who for some time had been the unifying symbol for many cultures, is no longer the center of human activities, at least in the cultures subjected to the mechanistic organization of life. The symbol "God" has ceased to be universal—if it ever was—not only because of the wars that have been waged in His name, but also because, rightly or wrongly, a considerable part of human consciousness sees in the theisms the last residue of a monarchical conception of reality fated to disappear. But this is not our subject.¹

Neither is a certain conception of democracy, or a certain economic welfare, a universal symbol. Man aspires to something more. Peace, however, seems to be something that all people, without distinction of ideology, religion, or personal disposition, accept as a positive, universal symbol. *Nemo est qui pacem habere nolit*, wrote St. Augustine (There is no one who does not wish to have peace).²

Symbols are the building blocks of myths. With a symbol, one can build many myths. By "myths," of course, we mean the horizons of intelligibility accepted by human beings and making possible the various *mythologoumena* lying at the basis of human cultures.³

A Sign of Peace

What is peace? A very familiar emblem used to symbolize many movements for peace consists of a circle divided into three equal segments.

¹ See my "Per una lettura transculturale del simbolo," in *Quaderni di psicoterapia infantile* (Rome: Borla, 1981), 53–91.

² See I. Lana, *L'idea della pace nell'antichità* (San Domenico di Fiesole: Edizioni Cultura della Pace, 1991), 158.

³ See my *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, 1979/XXVII, esp. the first part, 4–184. Now in Volume IX, Part 1 of this *Opera Omnia*.



I use this sign without necessarily endorsing other uses that may be or have been made of it.

Peace is composed of three equal essential elements: *harmony*, *freedom*, and *justice*. To ignore any of them necessarily deforms its essence.

Harmony

Below, at the base, is *harmony*—the maximum value in Chinese culture, as it may be the minimum in current Western culture, although it has been cultivated and loved in the West since the time of the Greeks. To say “*harmony*” is tantamount to saying “*balance*.” It means not only *Ne quid nimis*⁴ (Nothing to excess); it also means that each *quid* should have its place; that everything should be integrated; that nothing ought to be discarded: *ne quid futile*, provided anything superfluous exists for us. There is no such thing as absolute evil. *Harmony* between the inner and the outer, the body and the soul, the natural and the cultural, the masculine and the feminine, and so on—*harmony* among all sectors of reality. A goodly number of human cultures (the dualistic ones?) fail to comprehend that there can even be a peculiar *harmony* between good and evil. “*Von Zeit zu Zeit seh ich den Alten gern*,” says Mephistopheles.⁵

Harmony is difficult to perceive when we adopt an exclusively vertical or exclusively horizontal scale of values. In fact, *harmony* cannot be perceived only from without: one must be in the midst of it as well. *Harmony* can enable us to understand what we have said above, namely, that victory, even that of the “good guys,” never leads to peace.

“*Harmony*” means not only a *coincidentia oppositorum* but also a space in which there is room for all, without unitary reductionisms.

One of the most paradoxical and extraordinary sentences in literature is represented by Dante’s effort to explain this fundamental *harmony*: Hell is the work of wisdom and love. Over the gates of Hell, an inscription proclaims that this place has been created by the Holy Trinity: “*La divina potestate, somma Sapientia e l’primo Amore*.⁶ If this *harmony* disappears

⁴ Terence, *Andria* I.1.34. But its origin dates back to the aphorisms of two of the Seven Sages of Greece: Cleobulus’s *Metron ariston* [measure (moderation, proportion) is best]; and Solon’s *Méden agan* [nothing in excess].

⁵ Goethe, *Faust*, v. 350: “From time to time, I am glad to see the Old One” [God].

⁶ “The divine power, the supreme wisdom, and the primal love” (Dante, *Inferno* III.5–6).

from our consciousness, then the traditional Hell loses its *raison d'être*. It does not exist, it is an aberration. Catherine of Genoa went even further. To the question whether anything could exist that would be worse than Hell, she replied, "Yes, that it did not exist." Without it, no just harmony would be possible, in the medieval worldview.

This may be the most profound paradoxical expression of the meaning of harmony. Without harmony (and we can say, without inner, outer, political, . . . harmony) it is impossible to speak of the experience and reality of peace. Peace is harmony. Not even Hell destroys it. Hell is the dialectical possibility of harmony in the comprehensive conception of reality as maintained by many traditional religions.

We cite these examples in order to show that neither is harmony a bucolic idyll, nor peace a honeymoon. It is another matter whether the worldview today ought to be the same as that of our medieval predecessors.

Much has been written about harmony, from the time of Pythagoras and the Orphic rites down to our own days, obviously with Leibniz. The central idea expresses concatenation and order. *Concatenation* underscores the objective aspect: there must be an interrelationship among the parts of a whole in order that there be harmony. *Order* emphasizes the subjective aspect: there must be someone seeing, discovering this order. But we are saying more than this. We are saying, *first*, that harmony implies totality, something comprehensive: harmony embraces subject and object, knower and known. And *second*, by its very nature, harmony belongs to the ultimate structure of the universe. If all the processes of the universe were to function in some other way, *that* way would be the ultimate model, and on that basis we would be able to pass judgment on everything that is. *That* would be the harmonious way. Saying that the universe is harmonious is a qualified tautology. What *ought* to be cannot ultimately depend on more than what *is*—even the "ideal being" of Plato, Kant, Śaṅkara, or Abhinavagupta would do.

For us, this means that harmony, a dimension of peace, cannot be an ideal conception of "ours," a projection of "ours" of what harmony ought to be. In other words, peace cannot be imposed from without; peace must not be identified with *our* concept of peace; peace must be founded on the very nature of things, founded in the real harmony of the universe. For example, if it is true that the material universe subsists thanks to the fact that the big fish eats the little fish, then harmony and peace cannot consist in managing to keep people from hunting, although it will demand that they hunt according to the natural rhythm of things (in order to subsist, not to accumulate; in order to share in the universal symbiosis, not to make money; and so on). In a word, peace cannot be antinatural or violent, although, of course, these notions are open to various interpretations.

Pythagoras, according to Porphyry, taught, "In nature, everything has a beginning, a middle, and an end. . . . This is why everything having an end is threefold (because it also had a beginning and a middle)."⁷ Without entering into Pythagorean numerology, let us recall that 3 is traditionally the perfect number, expressing the harmony of everything that exists.⁸ Peace, as well, has a triadic structure. It is more than a dual tension or a monarchical dominion: it implies a relation, so to speak, that is never closed up in a monistic short circuit or exhausted in a dualistic struggle. Peace seems to require a constant flux from one thing to

⁷ *Vita Pythagorae* 51.

⁸ See the expressions: Trinity (Father, Son, Spirit), Triad (God, Man, Cosmos), *Trikala* (past, present, future), *Trimurti* (Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Āiva), *Triguna* (Sattva, Rajas, Tamas), *Triratna* (Buddha, *dharma*, *samgha*), *Tribhuvana* (earth, air, sky), ternary (subject, verb, object), *triloka* (the three worlds: heavenly, human, underworld), *Aum/Om* including three sounds, etc.

another, without ever a return by the same route—an ongoing giving and receiving. This is what we mean to suggest when we indicate that the basis of peace is harmony. "All problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony," wrote Sri Aurobindo at the beginning of his main work.⁹

Freedom

In the segment on the left of the peace sign is freedom. And here, "left" has a certain "political" connotation. A certain "left-wing" ideology seems more sensitive to freedom than to order.

What is certain is that freedom is an essential ingredient of peace. Without freedom, there is no peace. Saying freedom is tantamount to saying personal freedom, political freedom, group freedom, freedom of the Earth, freedom of matter, freedom of animals, freedom of microbes. . . . To give an example: Ayurvedic medicine does not kill microbes (which then return in force), but localizes them, so that, once they are isolated, so to speak, they will no longer proliferate. It is not correct to say, as one often hears, that the proliferation of bacteria is bad for people but good for the bacteria. Anthropocentric thinking is not overcome by eliminating anthropomorphism. It would be an evil for us—who are not bacteria—if bacteria were to restrict our freedom. But it is not an evil for the bacteria that their anti-homeostatic growth should cease to be stimulated. The proliferation of the bacteria also represents an evil for them, and for the universe as a whole. Liberty is not license.

Freedom does not mean mere freedom of choice. A wider range of choices may sometimes entail a *reduction* of freedom. To be able to choose this or that in a supermarket, or to be able to vote for this candidate or that, along a limited spectrum of possibilities, means a very relative freedom, and sometimes merely an apparent one: the options are restricted to what the supply offers. Man's freedom is antecedent to, and deeper than, the ability to choose. Freedom means absence of determination from without, absence of dependency, of alien influences, in such a way that my being can manifest itself, develop, according to what it is, without coercion from without or indoctrination from within. Freedom consists in doing, thinking, acting, and so on in conformity with what one is.

If much has been written about harmony, discussions on freedom are endless. For the case before us, we limit ourselves to saying that freedom implies self-determination, although very different ideas may be held regarding the nature of this *self* that determines itself, and there can be many interpretations of the meaning of determination.¹⁰ We also avoid dealing with the manipulations of freedom, so familiar in democratic technocracies, calculated to please voters and win their votes. Nor do we enter sociological considerations.¹¹ Our commentary is restricted to the thesis that an imposed peace is a contradiction: that there is no peace without freedom, and that authentic peace can be won only in a regime of freedom. For our purposes, we can identify freedom with an acknowledgment of the dignity of the person, which, accordingly, is incompatible with the degradation of that person to a mere means or a simple tool for "higher" ends. Depriving people of their freedom—as the current penitentiary system seems to think it is right to—is a threat against peace. The so-called criminal world, so frequently made up of ex-cons, knows all about that.

⁹ *The Divine Life* I.2.

¹⁰ See J. Ferrater Mora, *Diccionario de Filosofía* (Madrid: Alianza, 1984), s.v., "freedom," for a good summary of the issue.

¹¹ See S. Giner, *El destino de la libertad* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1987).

What we have nowadays is a secularized Christian *theologoumenon*.¹² In bygone times, penances were imposed in a claim of converting the sinner, and it was believed that a certain reparation won forgiveness for the fault; to this end, punishment was applied. No State believes in this today. Today, simply, those who have transgressed the law are deprived of freedom and are sometimes sentenced to prison terms of hundreds of years, like the old "indulgences"! Here we have another case of mental inertia. What we mean is that the "penitentiary" system (as it is still called) is not an institution of peace.

Our first ingredient for peace—harmony—helps us to resolve the so-called conflict of freedoms that so often has served to crush quantitative or qualitative minorities. Obviously there are conflicts among the aspirations of different individuals, and all freedom presupposes self-determination within an accepted, acknowledged, or simply given order. Not everything is as simple as traffic regulations, because human beings are not machines running on wheels, constrained to travel along preconstructed routes. Neither a car nor its driver is a free being. Personal freedom means the recognition of *ontonony*—one's own as well as that of others. The premise of *ontonony* is that the ultimate structure of Reality is harmonious, and that consequently the fullness of one being exists in a relation with the perfection of the whole.

But there is more. Freedom is an anti-mechanistic notion (without now entering the scientific considerations according to which even the laws of nature are indeterministic). The order or harmony of freedom is not automatically predictable, is not subject to once-for-all legislation, does not suppose a ready-made, determined universe. Human freedoms are not statistically expressible factors, unlike the so-called (with meaningful irony) degrees of freedom in mathematical physics.

This means that peace cannot be based on an immutable order—on a fixed, predetermined structure. Peace is not something like a field in which, after the calculation of each individual's respective degree of freedom, behavior is legislated that will respect those degrees. In other words: peace cannot be legislated once and for all—it would not be peace—any more than love can be commanded—it would not be love. Peace has nothing in common with the rigidity of a freedom in which each atom is assigned a determined space lest it disturb its neighbor. Peace must be created and re-created continuously, like in the *creatio continua* of Christian Scholasticism, which, being a free act of the Creator, incorporated His freedom into the very nature of things.

If peace implies and requires a regime of freedom, and if freedom means respect for the *ontonony* of the human person, it follows immediately that peace cannot be imposed. It must be received, earned, created, as we have been saying. There is no peace in the presence of a tyranny or dictatorship of any kind, individual or institutional, sacred or profane.

To put it another way: the ultimate subject of freedom is not the individual, but Being, Reality in its totality. If individuals seek to isolate themselves from the totality, they will never be free. They will be tyrants if they are more powerful than their neighbors, but the latter will continue to impose conditions on them, if only negatively. The "other" as *aliud* will always be alienating, coercive. Only when the *aliud* is discovered to be *alter*, "another I," can he or she be converted into a "you" and come to form part of our supraindividual identity; so that their appeal to us will no longer be just a series of coercions of our freedom, but a higher form of freedom. Without love, then, there is no freedom, as the wisdom of the ages knows so well. Freedom, before being a *right of the individual*, is a *character of Reality*. Hence, it is not a question of my *ego* renouncing its freedom in order that other *egos* may also be free, but the former's freedom grows stronger because it disappears as an

¹² Theological pattern. [Ed. note.]

individual and manifests itself as person. Only those who have overcome their own *egos* are the promoters of true peace.

A culture of peace must be a culture of freedom. Now, in the scientific-technological world in which we live, a world governed by quantitative laws right down to the voting laws, the profound freedom of the individual sees itself constantly forced. It will be said that, in the past, taboos and the weight of tradition also restricted the freedom of individuals. I answer that, in the first place, the sanction of tradition was believed to be of a superior order, and one's submission to it was not interpreted as a forced submission to the will of the majority on the part of those who did not belong to it. But in the second place—and this is the important thing—we must say that what we are advocating is not a return to old schemas. My metaphysical thesis (which it would be beside the point to expound here) is that the Parmenidean dyad of Being and Thinking leaves no room for the freedom of Being, which is constrained to obey Thinking.¹³ The culture of freedom demands other premises.

Justice

The area on the right in the peace sign represents justice. And indeed right-wing ideologies seem to have more affinity for a just order than for a presumably more dangerous freedom. But here too we have to say that justice is an essential ingredient of peace. Without justice there is no peace. And "justice" denotes not only the Latin concept of *iustitia*, it includes that of *dharma* as well, among many other things.

Dharma, as its very root indicates (*dhr*: to take, store, sustain), is the element of cohesiveness in the universe, the well-known *lokasamgraha* of the *Bhagavad-gita*.¹⁴ *Dharma* is justice, the fitting order and natural place of things. Thus, justice stands in direct contradiction with violence. Its relation to peace is traditional, and it is an obligatory theme for a philosophy of peace. *Opus iustitiae pax*.¹⁵

Iustitia et pax osculatae sunt (Justice and peace embrace), says one of the psalms.¹⁶ Justice, peace, and joy are characteristics of the kingdom of God, says St. Paul in a passage¹⁷ that has not been the object of adequate meditation. The criterion is joy (*chara*), joy in the Spirit.

An unjust peace is not only fragile and fleeting: it is not peace at all. For our purposes, let us limit ourselves to saying that justice attributes to each being that which belongs to it, what is that being's own, and its due: *suum cuique*.¹⁸ Here too the trait emerges that we have seen in the other two ingredients of peace: justice is a fundamental relation, it refers to our relations with others. Analogously, peace is not an intimist affair, having only an inner dimension. Inward peace requires and demands outward peace, as we have said.

The main problem of peace in its relation with justice consists in its cultivation and acquisition in situations of injustice, especially institutionalized injustice. The case of the Gulf

¹³ See my "Mythos und Logos," in H. P. Dürr and W. C. Zimmerli, eds., *Geist und Natur* (Bern, 1989), 206–20. In Volume IX, Part 1 of this *Opera Omnia*.

¹⁴ III.25: "The wise person ought to act with detachment, concerned only with maintaining the world" (see III.20). See also *Mahābhārata* XII.251.25, where "God" institutes the *dharma* for the *sangraha* of the world. I doubt that Goethe knew this verse of the *Gita* when he described the desires of Faust: "That I may know the assembled contents of the world's furthermost recesses" (*Faust*, 382–83).

¹⁵ "The work of justice is peace" (Is 32:17 in the Vulgate). See *Mahābhārata* VIII.69.59; XII.109.14.

¹⁶ Ps 85:11.

¹⁷ Rom 14:17.

¹⁸ See J. Pieper, *Über die Gerechtigkeit* (Munich: Kösel, 1953), which has become a Thomist classic, and valid for many non-Thomists as well.

War offers an extreme example, but the same can be said of the situation in Latin America, and so many other cases, such as the Italian Mafia, or work or family situations in which injustice reigns—at times, chronic, age-old injustice. The example of the inveterate injustices of patriarchal societies toward women is another example, of even greater proportions.

The first example cited just above, by reason of its very bellicosity and extremism, is paradigmatic. We are shocked at an isolated case of injustice: the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq. But this act is isolated in our minds, and we are insensitive to the accumulation of injustices in that region of the world over the course of centuries, especially since World War I. Now, if we go back to the birth of the State of Israel, why not, then, all the way up to Moses and the Promised Land? Indeed, could not the Canaanites claim back what the Jews once took away from them by force and cunning? There is a principle of jurisprudence called prescription, according to which a person's right to something expires after a certain length of time during which that right has not been exercised. Then, is Israel's current policy—that of waiting for time to heal the injustice—justified as the lesser evil? What if that turns out to be just a stratagem?¹⁹ Shall we have to go back to Adam and Eve? Shall we attempt to justify a struggle against a state of things because it is grounded on an injustice that yet lasts? Will peace be nothing more than the resignation of the vanquished, or some utopian dream?

Three considerations are in order. *First*: peace is a problem precisely because it presents itself as a goal in a nonpeaceful situation. Just as the true problem of tolerance arises in the presence of concrete intolerance, so the authentic problem of peace arises when one finds oneself in confrontation with unjust situations. It is easy enough to orate about justice as a cause and condition of peace, but that does not solve the problem. To think that, in order to attain peace, or live at peace, we must go back to the beginning, to the *status ante pacem*, is tantamount to declaring peace to be impossible. We would simply be grabbing at the facile gimmick of a *natura corrupta*, which therefore justifies all injustice, violence, and war. Have we not yet avenged Abel? We have criticized intimism, the withdrawal of peace to the sphere of the individual and interior. Peace is relational, and every relation has at least two poles.

Two considerations impel us not to accept a simply interior peace as a sufficient answer. One is precisely that peace is inseparable from justice. And justice, as we have said, is a relation. And relation is constitutive of the human person and all reality. One cannot have peace, not even interior peace, if one isolates oneself from the world. The attitude of the *bodhisattva* or the Christian is the most realistic. We are all set in a relation and interdependent. *Pratītyasamutpāda* and *nirvāna*, original sin and the Mystic Body of Christ are a reality. The true solitude of the mystic is not selfish isolation. The authentic monk enters into solitude in order to overcome isolation.²⁰

Another consideration militating against the intimism, seeking a merely inner peace by detaching oneself from the madding crowd, is in the risk of elitism (if not selfishness) of such a posture. Very few of us can withdraw from involvement in outward injustices, not for want of any moral values, but by reason of a human impossibility. To think that one can withdraw to a merely inner peace if one has sufficient spiritual formation, intellectual cognition, and socioeconomic comfort is to forget that Man is a person and not just an individual. Circumstances also belong to the human being. My "I" includes my circumstance (Ortega y Gasset), and the latter, in many cases, does not allow me such and such a comfortable distance. If the snipers are in the street, if exploitation is rampant, if it is a matter of my children's bread or

¹⁹ The theoretical/practical character of this book does not aim at rendering definitive judgment on the examples mentioned, which are useful merely in order to shed light on the complexity of the problems.

²⁰ See my *La sfida di scoprirsì monaco*, op. cit.

my own subsistence, if withdrawal from the *res publica* is not neutrality but cowardice, if not wanting to make a difficult decision is thereby to make a cowardly decision, if I live in a more or less inhumane concentration camp, . . . it is impossible to speak of an exclusively interior peace, because my very inferiority has been invaded from the outside.

Let us repeat: if anyone thinks that suffering is always ennobling, that oppression does not necessarily demean a person to the level of an animal, or that misery is not degrading, this is because that person has not been deprived of his or her power of thinking. It is important and urgent to be the voice of the voiceless, who have become not only aphonic, but mute: they no longer have anything to say. We cannot make a meditation on peace while comfortably entrenched in our manifold fortresses.²¹

The *second* consideration is the following. Justice must not be confused with legality.²² Peace is not content with lawfulness: peace aspires to justice. But justice does not establish by itself. Here we come across the excruciating problem of means and ends. Most wars have been undertaken on the pretext of defending justice. A "just cause"—it has been said since St. Augustine—is the first requisite for the justification of an act of war. We do not enter on this consideration here, but only observe that, if one extreme consists in the purism of a concern for the reestablishment of an order that has been disturbed (perhaps since the very origin of Man), or in the rebellion against any unjust order, the other extreme will consist in a more or less fatalistic resignation, and a tumble into the trap of mere lawfulness. Not only certain religious doctrines that inculcate a fatalistic resignation or eschatological patience should be criticized, but also a certain absolutization of democracy, which only tolerates an opposition that respects the intangible game rules and "sacrosanct" values of national Constitutions—that are usually opposed by those who have not voted for them.

Need we recall the slaves in the time of Pericles, or the three-quarters of the French, after the Revolution of 1789, who were not allowed to vote because they were unable to pay the poll tax? Or the Constitution of the United States itself, which excluded slaves and blacks? Peace is not synonymous with lawfulness because lawfulness is not justice. Many dictatorships are perfectly legal. The realization of peace, then, calls for more than sophists, attorneys, and politicians. The realization of peace calls for more than attachment to an antecedently established legality. Peace and justice alike demand more. And this brings us to our next comment.

The *third* consideration is that peace, like justice, points to transcendence, to something accepted as indisputable and regarded as outside the interplay of factors that help or hinder peace. We understand "transcendence" here in its literal sense: something out beyond the ingredients of a question. The model example, possibly, is God, but it could likewise be any other prevailing myth: we have cited the Constitution and democracy, and we have mentioned the State. A recognition that the establishment of peace requires a criterion—a norm or pole that enables us to speak of peace and that transcends the litigating parties—is no problem whatsoever. The phenomenology of transcendence is not very problematic; the difficult thing is its material recognition, its concrete notion. Hence our discussion on myth, which is indisputable simply because it is not disputed.

²¹ Horace's fine sentence, "Paupertas impulit audax ut versus facerem" [The boldness of poverty has driven me to write verse] (*Epistles* II.2.41), which he wrote when his goods had been confiscated, leaving him in the most absolute need, does not correspond to the reality of true poverty, any more than evangelical poverty (Mt 5:3) is human misery. Delivered from the superfluous, and reduced to a bare minimum, the daring person can write poetry—not so those who are starving to death, are persecuted for a defense of justice, or are shut up in a refugee camp.

²² See my "La legitimidad no es la justicia," *El Ciervo* 40 (1991): 15–16.

An example can spare us some ink. One may think that today's military system is unjust, and accordingly, that not only military laws but all laws that constrain citizens to accept obligatory military service (still in force in many countries) and military authority are unjust.²³ One may even think that the institution of the armed forces is the greatest obstacle to peace—but, in this case, one obviously cannot appeal to legality. Many others will attack such an opinion, reproaching it with being not only naïve but unjust to society, which in such a hypothesis would be rendered "defenseless." Our intention here is not to change the subject, but to examine its very foundation. Our example is not that of the conscientious objector, which is confined to the decision of the individual and to the series of risks that such a decision might entail. Our example is not a problem of individualistic morality, but one that concerns a society's justice, without which a real, lasting peace cannot be established. The sole plausible justification is for one to embrace with all one's heart—in all sincerity—something like, "God wills it," or "Uncle Sam wants you," or "Society has thus disposed," or "The law is the law," and so on—that is, to recognize a transcendence on which one confers an authority that conjures away all scruples of conscience.

This problem cannot be sidestepped in any serious reflection on peace. The most flagrant case is that of the guerrilla war and so-called terrorism. If violence is not the solution, still less will State or legal violence be. As long as the two parties do not commune in the same myth, there will be no peace. But myth is the acknowledgment of the transcendent. In order that there be peace on earth, the angels must sing in heaven (Lk 2:14). In translation, that means that without a radical anthropological and cosmological change, individuals cannot democratically bestow upon themselves the peace that they so rationally desire.

As we have seen, a mere description of what peace is stirs the most profound questions concerning the nature of Man and of reality.

The Complexity of Peace

We have described the three ingredients of peace, and the problems have mounted. We have yet to examine the proportion of these ingredients. How to combine harmony, freedom, and justice? Which of them is to rule the others? When—in the name of God, or a certain concept of justice, or a party, a race, a civilization, a culture, or a religion—we attempt to impose a certain order, peace does not follow. Our triadic symbol implies a confidence precisely in the trinity of elements that constitutes it. A fundamental human act consists in one's self-recognition as living reality. This acknowledgment leads to a kind of cosmic confidence in Reality. Where, beyond the real, could we place our trust? We have neither the duty nor the power either to create or to justify reality. Reality is not simply "there": it constantly becomes, of course, and we cooperate in the process; but *this* very activity belongs to reality. That means that experience enjoys a primacy over experiment, and the consciousness of life over thinking.

Experience, as its Latin root suggests, is the perception of something immediately given, without any mediation. Experiment manipulates the data, but ultimately must have recourse to experiences that are irreducible to others. In the case before us, none of our three elements (harmony, freedom, and justice) has the hegemony over the others. Circularity and interdependence are constitutive. Herein consists concord, as the last strophe of the *Vedas*²⁴

²³ See, still only by way of an example, J. Mosterín, "El secuestro militar," *El País*, July 7, 1991, although his recommendation of an army of experts in the science of killing and destruction poses just as many problems—and more serious ones, for that matter.

²⁴ RVX.191.4. The word here is *samāna* (from *sam*), which denotes communion, solidarity,

sings, as does the Western tradition²⁵ that goes back to Heraclitus²⁶ and is summarized in the consecrated expression *concordia discors*.²⁷

What we wish to indicate with all of this consists of two thoughts. The first is that cosmic confidence in Reality is the ontological premise for even knowing what mistrust is. We do not enter here into the theological problem of monotheism, or the philosophical problem of Being. We limit ourselves to a description of this sort of cosmic trust in a reality that is simply given, that is here, that we have not ourselves made. Reality is *causa sui*,²⁸ said the old philosophers. Reality has no need of anyone to "check up on it" in order to *be*, or of any argument in order to be proved. On what would such a check, or argument, be based? Unless Reality existed, no one could inquire into its existence. The question of Being or Nothingness would not be posed, were there no one existing to pose it. The degree of objectivity of our experience is another matter. Our only point is that cosmic confidence—which differs from epistemological certitude as well as from the concrete interpretation we give this trust—is an ontic necessity superior to the logical principle of noncontradiction. This is where peace is grounded.

The second thought to which we have referred expresses the dynamism of all reality, which moved Pythagorean Philolaos of Croton to say, "Harmony consists in the union of multiple things mixed, and in the community of spirit of those who think in divergent ways."²⁹ Nicomachus of Gerasa (second century CE), who quoted this sentence, stated beforehand, "Harmony is absolutely generated by the contraries."³⁰ Peace is not a static reality.

This leads us to a new consideration with regard to the peace sign. The three fields of peace are delimited by a circle, which in turn symbolizes three more aspects of peace: a circle of equally centered spaces. The circle represents the fact that peace is limited by its surface. Peace is not infinite, as neither is the circle, representing our concrete human condition and particular situation. There is no such thing as an infinite peace. Peace is a tangible, concrete, limited thing, which it is possible to enjoy. It is not a utopia. Peace is on a human scale, although it can always grow just as a circle, too, can become larger. But peace can grow only on one condition, that is, that we maintain the circle, so as to respect the equidistance from the center, the balance among its three fields, so that the latter remain equal.

Now, a circle is limited by its own circumference, which is indefinite in itself: it has no beginning or end, as any point can be its beginning, and at any point we can postulate that it ends. But what constitutes the circumference is its center. The circumference refers to its center, and nothing else. Now, as every point is equidistant from the center, we have no natural criterion for saying where the circumference begins and where it ends. Peace, like human plenitude, is undefined. Every person and each society have their respective peace—or lack of peace.

The fact that the three spaces must be equal signifies the balance that ought to reign among harmony, freedom, and justice in order that there be peace. Any imbalance alters

conjoint belonging, equality.

²⁵ See A. Gentili, "Problemi del simbolismo armonico nella cultura elisabetiana," in E. Castelli, ed., *Il simbolismo del tempo*, 59–102.

²⁶ Fragment 8 (Diels).

²⁷ See M. Bonicatti, "Chronos—Tyché—Melancholia," in E. Castelli, ed., *Il simbolismo del tempo*, 119–34.

²⁸ The cause of itself.

²⁹ The condensed Greek text is almost impossible to translate in a few words: *Esti gar harmonia polimigón hēnōsis kai dicha phroneontōn symphrōndsis* (Fragment 10 [Diels]).

³⁰ Fragment 187 (Diels).

this. The balance is precisely peace, but it cannot be established by any of its parts. If—so to speak—justice “prevails,” freedom and harmony will suffer. And the same can be said of the dominion of either of the other two. Hence the fact that many traditions have declared peace to be a gift: something given—and received—but incapable of being manipulated, even by the will, however “good” the latter might be.

Finally, in order that the three spaces may be equal within the circle, they need to be centered on the same center of the circumference that shapes the “cross” of peace. This center is the locus of love. Love centers the three ingredients of peace and is the criterion of their equilibrium. We are not, obviously, referring to love as pure sentiment or pure will. We mean that love that the ancients called *erôs*; the gospel, *agape*; and the *Vedas*, *kâma*, which “was in the beginning,”³¹ and which, being the “first germ” of life, is “more sublime than the Gods.”³² We are clearly referring to that primordial force, that *naturalis motus omnium rerum*,³³ which moves the Whole *hôs erômenon*³⁴ (insofar as it is loved), and which Dante described as “l'amor che move il sole e l'altra stelle” (the love that moves the sun and the other stars).³⁵ Human peace, then, the peace of our experience, is not the ultimate reality. Peace seems to have a side of instability.

We mean that, in its complexity, peace is neither natural nor supernatural. It is not natural because, in the ensemble of the elements that make up peace, each of them seems to tend to invade the terrain of the others, that is, to destroy what medicine calls homeostasis. Countries overly concerned with justice restrict freedom, and vice versa: where freedom is sacrosanct, justice frequently suffers. And with too much harmony in the country, “your neighbors will invade you.”

Peace is not supernatural, because if it were, we should have to begin all over again. Who possesses pure revelation, uncontaminated by (contingent) human interpretations, so as to be able to dictate the adequate relation among the three sectors in question? To confuse religion with ethics is to run a great risk. A supreme ethical principle, a criterion of good and evil, would in some sense be superior to good and evil itself, which is a contradiction even for ethics.

Perhaps we ought to say (although this, too, will be an imperfect formula) that peace is meta-natural.

* * *

To sum up—after this series of considerations, which, perforce, has contained a great deal of analysis—I should define peace, according to the a-dualist view that has inspired us from the outset, in the following manner.

Peace is not a simple state of mind, but is rather a state of being, a state of Being: that state of Being corresponding to the being in question. That is, peace is a “well-being” in Being. When a being is in its place, it is at peace. When a bone, an individual, or a society is not in its place, it is not at peace: the bone hurts, the individual is uneasy, the society is unstable. And so with every being. But the spatial metaphor must be understood dynamically and freely. The metaphor of space must, however, be understood in a dynamic, free sense. The “place” of which we speak is not a predetermined space, or static locality, in which each

³¹ See *RV* X.129.4; *AV* XIX.52.

³² See *AV* IX.2.19.

³³ John Scotus Eriugena, *De Divisione Naturae* I.74.

³⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII.7 (1072a26).

³⁵ Dante, *Paradiso* XXXIII.145.

being occupies its spot in a rank and file as in a regiment, nor is each part localized like in a machine. Instead of place, I could have said "duty." Peace emerges when a being complies with its duty. But here again the metaphor could be misunderstood. The duty in question is not an extrinsic one. Each being's *ought-to-be* is its *being-where-it-belongs*. "When each being fulfills its function" might be a third formulation of the same notion.

That shows us that the difficulty will lie in the discovery of this "place," "duty," or "function." We spoke earlier of the cosmic order. A theist could call it the "will of God." A "state of being," we said: that state that corresponds to a being. The difficulty abides. What criteria do we have to discern that "state" or that "will"? None, except tautological ones. One is in one's place when one has peace, and one has peace when one is in one's place. There is peace when a society is integrated into the cosmic order, and when a society is integrated into the cosmic order there is peace. The "will of God" gives me peace when I know that it is God's will, and I know that it is God's will when I have peace. . . .

Precisely because peace pertains to the ultimate order of things, the situation could be no other. There is no ulterior reference point. It will be said that an out-of-place tibia hurts because its place is visible to everyone; while the place of an individual—as this depends, among other things, on that individual's own will—cannot be known with such precision, since this same will, being free, frequently has doubts about its decisions. A community has peace when it is integrated into an internal and external order that permits the ontonomic realization of all of its components; but peace is the very criterion.

Matters become even more complicated when we incorporate the mystery of evil into our argument. Peace is a relation. I—as an individual or as a society—can be very much at peace with myself and with others; but suddenly an envious enemy rises up, seeking to rob me or invade me. My peace has been disturbed by an extrinsic factor. Now I must make a decision that is all the more difficult for the fact that I know that I have given some occasion for this violation of my peace by these outsiders.

However, all of this only carries us to a far deeper and more realistic conception of peace. It shows us, in the first place, that peace is not a static state, and that, accordingly, it constantly finds itself in progress. In the second place, peace is neither purely subjective nor exclusively objective: it is relational. In the third place, it is never "perfect," that is, never complete. In the fourth place, it is not available to precise definitions because of its character of ultimacy. In the fifth place, it has no biunivocal relation with the rest of reality—I can be at peace with others without others being at peace with me. In the sixth place, peace is not a monolithic block; it is multiform, and pluralistic as well. It has different facets, degrees, nuances. We cannot qualify it, since its facets are not homogeneous. And finally, it shows us that peace is the relation that joins us, equitably and with freedom, to a harmonious Whole.

Obstacles to Peace

If, at first sight, peace looks to be impossible to realize, it also presents itself as something *to be* realized because it is never fully realized. The realization of peace collides with countless obstacles, many of which are obvious, but not less important. The ambition to have "more at any cost," on the part of individuals or entire countries, is an example.³⁶ A whole series of ethical problems is in the foreground here: problems of justice (the just distribution of wealth), of the freedom of the person, and so many others. Anything that, in one way or another, wounds any of the three ingredients of peace represents an obstacle to it.

³⁶ Gandhi's statement is well known: "The world offers enough to satisfy our needs, but not our greed."

By no means must we omit the moral questions: if people were "good," if they did not exploit their fellows, if they used technology with moderation, if they effected a better distribution of what they have received, and eliminated resentment, greed, and hatred, then obviously a great deal would have been gained in the direction of the establishment of peace among human beings. The existential problem lies in the conditional "if" that governs the whole sentence. A certain pragmatic moral theory has even argued whether it would not actually be more advantageous to one's own self-interest to be moral and always to tell the truth. And yet, the "if" remains as problematic. *Ethos anthrópō daimón*, Heraclitus said: Man's behavior stems from his spirit.³⁷

But we keep faithful here to the title of our study, and refrain from heading down these roads, which are being amply dealt with by a growing number of authorities. Rather, we concentrate on the structural problems of the modern culture that we are trying to disarm. Without this disarmament, we insist, no effort for peace will be lasting. Not that we mean to ignore or slight the ethical problems. On the contrary, the ethical dimension is at the base, and supplies us with the energy we will need in order to overcome the institutional obstacles that we are about to mention. Without the ethical thrust that conquers ambition, selfishness, and lack of love, our analysis would be inoperative. On the supposition, then, of the morality of the person, we restrict ourselves to a consideration of the three greatest obstacles.

The Military Ideal

Our first obstacle might be dubbed "the military degeneration." There has been a gradual evolution in our awareness and justification of the military State, culminating in the current mutation. I begin with praise for the military ideal. It goes without saying that I have no intention of questioning the goodwill and "chivalry" of today's soldiers. Here would be an application of what I have said, on many occasions, about mental inertia.

From a historical-religious viewpoint, the soldiers, the *kṣatriyas*, the nobility, the warriors, are one of the most extraordinary creations of human civilization. It is the soldier, in the classic sense, who has the function of *lokasangraha* (as the *Bhagavad-gītā* would say), the maintenance of the cosmic cohesion of the universe. The nobility, the military, have a stricter code than have others, since their duty is to offer the cosmic sacrifice that maintains the earthly world and the whole universe in cohesion. The *brahmans* themselves are at the orders of the *kṣatriyas*. The military represents defense in the face of the assaults of the invader, and the warranty of security. We could sum it up by saying that the social order is based on the same tripartite schema of functions that the cosmic order is: it comprises representatives of Heaven (the priesthood in its manifold senses), Earth (business people and laborers), and Man (the soldier and the politician). It will suffice to mention G. Dumézil³⁸—without necessarily accepting all his theses—to make our point clearer.

The soldier is the knight who has the task of defending the widow, the poor, the sick, the pilgrim, and so on. Let us recall the religious military Orders. Military personnel are perhaps the only ones today to hold on to the old-fashioned uniform, along with their music, their braids and chevrons, and their swords. The soldier is not permitted things that others may be. The ritual sense of life is still preserved in the military spirit. The life of the soldier is a model of virtues. The very word "virtue" is instructive: its etymology refers to the positive qualities typifying the *vir*, the male human being, who is basically the knight, that is, the

³⁷ Fragment 119 (Diels).

³⁸ *L'idéologie tripartite des indo-européens* (Bruxelles, 1958).

warrior. Homer's *areté* (strength, virtue) is precisely military; only later—with Aristotle, especially—does it come to be regarded as a civilian quality.

This state of affairs has been undergoing an evolution, with a consequent degeneration and culminating in a mutation. The reason for its degeneration is power. The reason for its mutation is technocratic modernity. And so the military institution today is a caricature of what it once was. "We ought to stop producing war literature," Virgil warned: *Ne tanta animis adsuescite bella.*³⁹

Let us have a theological digression. When the Vatican Council II sought to condemn atomic weapons, urged by one of its five moderators—Cardinal Lercaro—the theologians did not realize that the Lateran Council II (1139), in its canon 29, had already condemned nuclear missiles and bombs *ante litteram*, and this under pain of excommunication.⁴⁰ Arms are licit only if and when they constitute an extension of the human arm, as is the case with the spear and the sword. The utilization of these latter weapons ("cold steel") involves the entire being. It is not my brute strength that does battle, but my whole being, for I am an instrument of the divine justice. Thus, if I have not the necessary concentration, which requires serenity and peace of soul, it means that reason is not with me. We need only think of the "judgments of God," that is, the duels, and the whole theory of the martial arts. Obviously, without God's help I will be wounded or vanquished, since I will not have all that is required in order to be the victor: it is not physical strength that counts, but the whole ensemble of reality. The struggle is still something in which the very Gods are engaged. But we could assign a less providential and more psychological explanation: the whole force of the spirit is concentrated in the arm when that spirit is pure, and gathers all the available energy of the universe.

The moment weapons are disjoined from the arm and "lethal," long-distance weapons are invented, their power becomes independent of Man and is converted into brute force, into a simply destructive power. The stronger, not the more just, wins. The more astute wins, not the nobler. And this is intrinsically evil. The weapon is no longer an extension of Man but an independent force. With nuclear weapons, obviously, things have completely changed: they have reached the end of this evolution, they have degenerated.⁴¹

It is false that war is a natural phenomenon. There is a quite convincing literature on this today. The works of Fromm, of Konrad Lorenz, of Eibl-Eibesfeldt, and so many others show that animals do not wage war. War is a ritual act, and successively, the degeneration of that rite. No *natural* aggressiveness leads to war.⁴² Peace is a metanatural phenomenon, as we said earlier, from a cosmic viewpoint. Now, on an anthropological level, we affirm that war is a cultural phenomenon. As civilization grows, war, in a certain sense, waxes apace. As Lewis Mumford said, the essence of civilization is the exercise of power.

Without any attempt to tally up the frequency of wars, the European case is anyway instructive. Every century since 1500 has seen more wars than the previous century. In the

³⁹ *Aeneid* VI.832: "Do not instill your minds with all these wars!"

⁴⁰ *Artem autem illam mortiferam et Deo odibilem ballistariorum et sagittariorum, adversus Christianos et catholicos exerci de cetero sub anathemate prohibemus* [But the practice of that deadly art, hateful to God, of missiles and arrows, against Christians and Catholics, we forbid under pain of excommunication] (cited by G. Alberigo et al., *Conciliariorum oecumenicorum decreta* [Bologna: Istituto per le Scienze Religiose, 1973], 203). Denzinger appreciated this text much, and rightly so.

⁴¹ As we know, casuistry crept into the interpretation of the Lateran Council's text, and "Christian" princes did not regard themselves forbidden to use such arms against infidels and heretics.

⁴² See a brief summary from the viewpoint of the history of religions in H. Gekle, "Militarismus," *Cancik* 1 (1988): 394–406.

sixteenth century, Europeans fought against one another in 87 battles; in the seventeenth century, 239; in the eighteenth century, 781; in the nineteenth century, 651; and in the first forty years of the twentieth century, 892 battles were fought, according to statistics compiled by Wright and cited by Erich Fromm.⁴³ The number of the wounded and killed in the first wars was 0.01 percent of the total population. Now it is 13 percent. We now have 30 million persons permanently under arms, and these are just some of the data. Have we need of much further discussion on the degeneration of war, the mutation of its meaning, its antinaturality, and the more and more problematic nature of the armies as institutions?

All of this is all the more significant for the fact that the *ius ad bellum*, which before the First World War was still regarded as a right of every sovereign state, has been proscribed in a goodly proportion of modern Constitutions.

After the mercenary armies—as most of them were until the eighteenth century—came the obligatory military service, which was seen as a sign of progress, as the duty of defending the nation incumbent upon every fit citizen. But the noble motive of defending one's homeland was transformed into a naïve idealism when the "art of war" attained a higher ratio of technologization. Once more, mercenaries were needed, now called "military advisers."⁴⁴ Montesquieu⁴⁵ had felt it coming: the moment science was placed at the service of the armed forces, the duty of defense was transformed into competition for destructive capacity.

All of this leads us to ask not only for a unilateral disarmament, but also for the abolition of the military institution, utopian as that may appear to those who call themselves "realists" and make their option for a "lesser evil." The question is that *this* might well be the greater evil. It is therefore a matter of being able to discern a third alternative—besides, obviously, determining the intermediate steps to the goal of the said emancipation of the military. The common people are beginning to wonder whether the greatest obstacle to peace will not be precisely the very existence of military institutions. But we will not get down to practical details in this study, despite our acknowledgment of their importance.

The Technocratic Civilization

A second feature of modern culture as an obstacle to peace is technocracy. We have already spoken of this, but we shall add three more considerations: the human scale, the nature of technocracy, and modern science.

The Human Scale

Technocracy, besides destroying the human scale, represents the abandonment of the measure proper to Man and its replacement with the measure proper to the machine. This may well be another Freudian "transfer" of the divine infinitude to a spatial and human "unlimitedness."⁴⁶ But at all events, at least in the case of the ecosystem, it implies the destruction of the equilibrium that is an indispensable condition for peace. Caricaturing it a little, we may say that the technocratic Man is no longer a biped, but a wheeled being; no longer

⁴³ *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1973), 215.

⁴⁴ Again, see Moserlin, *op. cit.*

⁴⁵ "The moment one State augments what it calls its troops, the others at once augment theirs," quoted in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*.

⁴⁶ We need only cite the works of Alexandre Koyré (among them, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* [New York: Harper, 1957]) and Werner Marx (*Gibt es auf Erden ein Mass?* [Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1983]) to span the cosmological and ethical poles of what I mean to indicate: the basic continuity of Western civilization, even when it is debunked.

a knight, but a coach driver; no longer *homo loquens* but *homo pulsans atque telematicus* (button-pressing and remote-controlling). He no longer speaks, but amplifies his decibels, and passes on information that is no longer communication. He no longer walks, but drives or flies. Everything is now made on a grand scale, a broadened scale. The person is now reduced to an operator, always on the move toward faraway places in order to cooperate with electronic elaborations, thus becoming a simple factor in a grand network of information.

Let's imagine a citizen without wheels, telephone, or newspapers, and without a job involving thousands of coproducers and consumers. He would not survive; he would feel a "misfit." The interdependence of autochthonous beings has been transformed into an intradependency of functional parts, therefore easily replaceable. No one believes him- or herself unique, since no one knows who he or she is. The individual is a minimal cog in the gears of the megamachine. Standing before the Pyramid of Cheops, a man was small, and might feel afraid unless he belonged to the clan; standing before the Pentagon in Washington, he is outright insignificant, and may well feel terror, unless he is part of the System.

In the technocratic civilization, everything is remote-controlled, not from above, but from afar (by computers, the law of supply and demand, needs and conveniences, and so on). Traditional interventions "from above" (Providence, Destiny, *karman*, etc.), by virtue of an intrinsic demand of peace, had a transcendent origin. In the technocratic civilization, immediacy, if not spontaneity, has been lost, since nearly everything is calculable, and, at least statistically, foreseeable. Fortunately—as this same adverb shows, recalling the Goddess Fortune—modern Man does not only live on technocracy, that is, under the power of technology. But if a flight to the inner world, while difficult, is possible, escape from the outer world is practically impossible. We live and move and are⁴⁷ in an artificial world. Peace, too, comes out prefabricated and artificial.

Some will say that this is Man's future: everything is calculable, everything is foreseeable. Breathing will be artificial, just like food and the air. "Services" will function better, and Man will have been delivered from the slavery of work and the anguish of hunger and sickness. It is a consistent vision. Only the strongest and ablest will survive. This is the response we hear to the objection that a system that consumes more than 80 percent of the available renewable energy will only permit the survival of one-fourth of our current population. Once more, we have "natural selection"—but this time, the "natural" selection is artificial.

Having examined the situation and said all there is to say, we promptly fall back into the Western Latin-Anglo-Saxon mentality, which, though steeped in basically Christian morality, remains secular and technocratic by nature. It seems that overcoming our *mythos* is as impossible as stepping out of our shadow. Even though today we all agree that we must abandon every form of ethnocentrism, whether on the part of the whites, the Europeans, or the rich countries, at the same time it does not even occur to us that this would mean replacing technocentrism with a healthy cultural pluralism.

Purely technological means will never help us understand, much less solve, the ecological and economic problems that are due largely to the breakdown of natural rhythms. The problem is anthropological, geological, and also theological. We have exceeded the limit of tolerance of the earthly *bios* and the human psyche; two-thirds of the world are increasingly troubled and fully aware of the inevitable catastrophes that await us if we do not decide to change. We have reached the bottom.

Despite this, all the solutions proposed so far are no more than abstractions and theories: more schools (how?), more money (from where?), more television information (why?), and more technology (for solving problems that are not technological).

⁴⁷ With ironic reference to Acts 17:28. [Ed. note.]

A few examples offer more than an entire chapter. Forty thousand children die of malnutrition every day. Experts say that 80 percent of these deaths could be avoided with less than a dollar per child. They want us to believe that the solution is possible. Since we do not fulfill this possibility, are we criminals? Or could it be that this possibility is and remains a pure abstraction? What is the use of a theoretically possible and practically impossible solution? Or are we continuing to live in a pseudo-Platonic world of pure ideas? Could it be that we dare not think it is our system that makes the solution impossible? We have "known" how to solve the problem for thirty years, but the general situation has not stopped getting worse, and nobody dares to stand up against the "sacred cows" that keep alive the system I call technocracy. We simply refuse to face the facts: if the whole world were to consume the same amount of energy that the First World consumes, the future of the planet would be doomed to a short life. If the whole world were to use the same amount of paper that the United States consumes, in a few years' time not a single tree would be left on the planet.

India is said to have not enough schools. It would, in fact, need sixteen thousand new schools each year, each with a thousand pupils per class and the relative number of teachers. Before this situation, many experts dreamed of a single, immense television network, the installation of which would have destroyed the structure of Indian society. All we do is make technocratic calculations; when we are faced with new situations we never consider solutions learned from traditional societies.

In a traditional society, first of all, professors are not just experts who specialize in passing on techniques designed to secure wages. In such a society, in fact, education is very different. Besides the teachers there are the traditional educators—parents, grandparents, the family in general, friends, the elderly, *gurus*, ancestors, the streets, parties and celebrations, the very life of the people or the city. We need a new conception of education. In other words, our project must be intercultural and multireligious. One implies the other, by virtue of the intrinsic bond between religion and culture.

The different cultures of the world are more than just exotic, and sometimes useful, integrations into our predominant technocratic civilization. They are more than just charming folklore elements that serve to complete our visions of the world with a touch of *yoga* here and a little *Zen* there. They represent multiple visions of the world and, therefore, multiple worlds.

To give one last example, *military* disarmament will end up being merely a masquerade if we are not prepared to undertake the *cultural* disarmament of the predominant technocratic civilization, with all that it entails: modern science, modern technology, nation-States, the world market, economic totalitarianism, and so on. If the problem is cultural and religious, our disarmament must be also. Patches are no longer of any use.

The answer cannot be technological (a quest for better *solutions*), but must be anthropological (asking: What is *Man*?). But our problem is peace. And peace becomes impossible in this kind of perfected technocratic system, because it turns out to be superfluous: it is no longer a value. The craftiest, the ablest (not the most intelligent), or the strongest will impose order. What now is the natural order will be the order of those who take over the big technocratic machine. (I was about to write, "of those who will grasp the reins of the system.")

This poses humanity a fundamental option, which, for all its vagueness and difficulty, is nonetheless transcendental: are we going toward a technocratic regime on a planetary—and even solar—scale, or shall we integrate ourselves once more into the rhythms of the Earth, and even the Sun? Will we choose acceleration or rhythm?

The option is vague, because the decision of an individual in a quantitative world is a "negligible quantity," as the thinkers of the eighteenth century said when they introduced the infinitesimal calculus. It is vague, furthermore, because it cannot be restricted to being merely negative, antitechnological, but must be a decision in favor of a viable order nowadays. And finally, it is vague because the individual counts for so little, and individual effort is diluted in a collective mass that makes no decisions.

The decision is difficult, as well, because of the enormous power of technology. But to take no decision is itself to decide to bolster the strength of the mainstream. The solution is not easy since a mere destruction of the technocratic apparatus is not feasible, nor would it be conducive to peace.

The Nature of Technocracy

The second consideration bears on the very nature of technocracy. I summarize it here in nine propositions, more as points for discussion than as theses to be defended.

1. There is an essential difference between technique, in the sense of *techné*, and contemporary technocracy. A mutation, not a linear continuation (progress) of the traditional techniques (arts), has taken place at the heart of a single culture. Technocracy is the dominant attribute of contemporary civilization.
2. Technocracy is more than applied science. It represents a cultural ensemble that might be called "technocratic civilization." The socioeconomic aspect is as essential to it as is the scientific.
3. Technocracy is not neutral nor universal, nor, therefore, is it open to universalization. It is not a cultural invariable. It is the fruit of a single culture, to which it is essentially tied.
4. Technocracy is autonomous, and therefore creates a "fourth world" claiming its independence from Man, Nature, and the Gods.
5. Technocracy begins with a mechanistic and gravitational conception of the world, and leads to the dominion of the machine. Its proper method is experimentation, not experience, and it only makes sense in a quantifiable universe.
6. Technocracy presupposes that Man is essentially different from nature and its feudal liege. It presupposes that matter has no life.
7. Technocracy supposes that reality is objectifiable, and hence an object of thought.
8. Technocracy is founded on a nominalistic view of reality.
9. Technocracy believes that dominion and control of the so-called natural forces represent "progress" toward the perfection of Man and the universe.

These nine propositions, rather metaphorical in character, should be complemented with a sociological reflection that would let us better understand the bond existing between what we have just said and the significant fact that the four most important industries of the current culture are money, arms, advertising, and tourism. We would also be reminded that, currently, the productive capacity of the industrial world exceeds by more than one-third the consumer capacity of the entire world. No wonder the world foreign debt rises yearly, as do the number of the poor and the number of military conflicts.

It might be objected that technocracy is sometimes a unilateral, even "defective" civilization, but this would not prove that it is a major obstacle to peace. Before we answer that, we must still introduce our third consideration.

Modern Science

Our third consideration may be the most delicate because, in bearing on a modern myth, it wounds our sensibilities. It is a matter of fairly general opinion that we need more sovereignty of ourselves and a better use of modern technology. Many would agree that we must not let ourselves come under the domination of the machine, and that we should spiritually progress so as to be up to a material disarmament. But few will dare touch the taboo of modern science—and this entails certain serious consequences, which I have attempted to study elsewhere. I try to express my conception here in three points.

1. *Modern science is not the only existing science.* In an attempt to synthesize the experience or wisdom that has become crystallized over the last six thousand years of human experience, the development of Europe in the last four centuries ought to be scaled down. I once heard the rector of an illustrious university say, at an international congress being held in its magnificent hall, that 40 percent of all the important scientists of the world were gathered there, and that 90 percent of those who have made humanity's great discoveries are alive in our day. Such blindness, ethnocentrism, and naïvete simply astound me. It is suspect, to say the least, to think that we are the only wise ones that there have ever been in the world, and that those who came before us were no more than forerunners of our Science—as if someone maintained that he is the only wise man, and all other people are fools or intellectually disabled persons.

Modern science is a stupendous creation of the human spirit. It has achieved, in its field, conquests that no other civilization has attained. But its field is not the whole field of knowledge, let alone of the human. These are our other two points.

2. *Modern science is not knowledge.* Modern science is not science in the usual understanding of this term. "Science" (*jñāna, gnōsis, scientia*) means "knowledge." And knowing means striking a vital communion with the Real, being together with the known things: to be "born together" (*con-naitre*). Knowledge is union, interpenetration. It is an end in itself: the very life of the knower. Knowing entails joy because it is salvation: it saves Man from his limitation, and opens out to the very confines of the universe. Knowing, in this full sense, which is inseparable from loving, allows Man to live the fullness of his being. Modern science is no longer knowledge in this classical, traditional sense. Not all persons can be scientists. All, however, are called to be wise sages and enjoy reality.

It is very instructive to observe how the Oracle of Delphi has been interpreted through the centuries. *Gnōthi seauton* (Know yourself) consists not in observing oneself as an object, but rather in coming to discover in oneself that one-self that is not the object of any knowledge, but precisely the subject of it.⁴⁸ The journey consists in coming to be oneself: *isthi sou* (be yourself); *tat tvam asi* (this is you).⁴⁹ "Eternal life is this: to know you."⁵⁰ But this is not the knowledge of modern science, despite the latter's appropriation of the name.

From the standpoint of peace, the argument runs as follows. If science, *gnōsis*, is the most valuable thing there is, and if this science is the privilege of a few, then a mortal inequality is struck in the heart of Man, opening the door to the most desperate competition. In vain will scientists declare that they do not possess the universal panacea, and that they know perfectly well the limits of scientific knowledge. The fact remains: science's unshakable successes, and its

⁴⁸ See A. M. Haas, *Nim din selbes war* (Freiburg: Universitäts-Verlag, 1971).

⁴⁹ See Panikkar 1977/XCV, 747ff.

⁵⁰ Jn 17:3.

symbiosis with modern technology, have persuaded the people that "outside science is no salvation." And indeed, unless you have a career in the techno-scientific field, there is little to "eat" today in the First World and its satellites. If the fundamental thing for Man is knowing, and if this becomes (except for the elementary necessities of life) the speciality of a few, then we are implanting in the human heart one of the causes of a lack of peace. A culture of peace cannot be an elitist culture with respect to what is fundamental for Man—the problems of education included. A culture of peace will have to dismantle our contemporary systems of education. The problem is complex, however, and it is not our present task to give advice about it.

3. *Modern science is violent.* We limit ourselves to a mere sketch of the third point, which in a certain sense extends further than modern science. We are accustomed to use reason—unconsciously, in most instances—as a weapon. Our civilization is a civilization of armed reason. Our reason is no longer science, or wisdom, or experience; it is experiment and power. Our reason makes conquerors of us, it permits us to "con-vince," control, predict, rule. Dialectic is an intellectual struggle, and very frequently, a war.⁵¹

If it is true that we use reason as a weapon, then what we have said about cultural disarmament as a condition for peace is understandable. First we must confront armed reason, and then overcome it. In Romance languages, for "I am right," one says, "I *have* reason [on my side]": I have "convinced," conquered you. But reason is not for having (possessing) or for convincing. The intellect, knowledge, is not for having power or subduing. It is for enjoying, for seeing, for judging, for salvation—that is, for attaining human fullness, as most traditions put it. Knowledge is for *being*.

We cannot and must not underestimate the value of reason. The sentence "Man is a rational animal" was used for the first time, as far as we know, by Aristotle. Translated into Latin, it loses its meaning. Aristotle's original phrase says rather that "Man, among the animals, is the one in whom *logos*, language goes through."⁵² *Logos* passes by way of Man, and Man is not its sovereign. But if the phrase is translated as "rational animal," then *ratio* (reason, in Latin) becomes a human weapon. Animals have strength, horns, hides, hooves, and so on. Man, this armed animal, has conquered the others, has conquered matter, and has built the atomic bomb—but victory does not lead to peace.

The disarmament of reason is a deep and difficult task, but we must undertake it if we hope to achieve true peace. No, the task is not easy. We have heard it said repeatedly that reason should be our guide, that we should be suspicious of feelings and sentiment, and that the alternative is to fall into irrationality.⁵³ That human reason, in all its frailty and limitations, has the power to weigh Man's actions and thoughts in no way means that it has the role of guide, let alone of inspirer, of human life. As happens in these cases, the difficulty lies in the choice of alternatives. Fideism, inspiration, feelings, and revelations have sufficiently shown their inability to rule human destinies. A pure voluntarism would be even worse. We have no wish to disarm our reason only to fall victim to these superstitions.

To speak of a pure heart, and to adopt Spinoza's ethics, will always be a very rational thing to do. And to destroy reason in order to allow room for faith, in conformity with good

⁵¹ See my "La dialéctica de la razón armada," op cit.

⁵² *Politics* I.2 (1253a9).

⁵³ An entire congress of philosophy was dedicated to this problem. There were readily admitted to be many forms of rationality, but few presentations dared to dethrone reason, without thereby enthroning irrationality. Even without consulting the proceedings, see the 714-page volume of abstracts: *Weltkongress für Philosophie* (1978).

Kantian intentions, leads us ultimately to the Hegelian reaction. Perhaps we have listened too little to Hamann and Jacobi to be able to follow the thread of European history in recent centuries. But the current situation has changed.

The cultural project of these last six thousand years must be changed. We must learn to overcome the inertia of the mind. This will be the last obstacle in our considerations.

Evolutionary Cosmology

I think that it must be clear by now that reflections on peace cannot be limited to finding ways of human fellowship and means to avoid war. For this, a World Police would suffice. A reflection on peace leads us to the furthest depths of the very structure of reality. Peace is not the outcome of a strategy, but a fruit of contemplation.

Let us simplify the question to the maximum: Why would peace be impossible in a technological civilization? Why should the world of machines, which has integrated Man into itself, be less peaceful than the other three worlds? Would not a mechanical world, with its laws, be more suited for peace than the anarchical world of Men, the chaotic world of Nature, and the mysterious world of the Divinity?

We have already alluded to the theory of evolution as an epistemological presupposition. It is not so much a matter of the evolution of species as it is of the entire evolution of the universe. If reality is no more than the evolutionary process of an amorphous mass that gradually comes alive, then becomes humanized, then even deified; if the human intellect, in its broadest and deepest sense, is no more than an evolutionary epiphenomenon affording us an awareness of what surrounds us; in a word, if there is no transcendence, no verticality, no other dimension; if everything that "there is" is only what evolves, then "peace" is an anachronistic word, and a sentimental residue that stirs a reaction on our part just as we hear the cry of the living beings who are caught in the backwaters and blind alleys of the evolutionary sweep, and who do not share in the victors' banquet, who are not part of the evolutionary thread leading to the Omega Point.

The doctrine of universal evolution tells us that every step from one form of existence to another is taken at the cost of millions of beings who disappear in order that, out of their magma, inorganic, then organic, living, sensory, and intelligent matter may rise up, all the way up to the Superman and the Divine. Experience teaches us that this is indeed the way things are in the world of Man: out of thousands of slaves arise a handful of free persons; out of a human mass of millions emerge noteworthy personalities; and out of billions of people of the Third World (who actually are *two-thirds* of the world) sacrificed on the altars of progress will emerge a purified humanity, ready for the leap to the Superman. Peace would then be the recognition of this evolution. Let us see to it that there be no racism, nationalism, or fanaticism, since these are not the values that will survive: technocentrism is the victor. Those who know how to run machines will survive. The "true" peace is the one preached by the first God of Israel: peace for His people, the good, the winners. Nietzsche saw it clearly, although he seems then to have been crushed by his vision.

For centuries, a goodly part of humanity has journeyed toward this more or less explicit technocratic goal. But we also know how far this competitive attitude can take us. Perhaps we are now beginning to realize, by their results, that all of these dreams have left out another ingredient of reality, one irreducible to the technocratic world. It may even be God, perhaps as an antidote, the most powerful symbol, although possibly the least adequate one. The Gods, generally speaking, have been Gods of war: "YHWH sabaoth" is the God of armies. But there is no reason for the Divine to be identified with an anthropomorphic God, the

"Lord" of history or "King" of the universe. A solely transcendent God, a God stationed only at the end of history, time, or the universe, has, generally speaking, been the belligerent God of many religions, despite the protests of the mystics and the subtleties of the philosophers. This eschatological God, who receives only the few victors who have reached the goal, is a God not of peace but of war. He is the God of evolution. "Few are the saved."⁵⁴ Some Christians (including Catholics) speak of a "perverse God."⁵⁵

But there is another possible conception of the Deity: a Divinity who is neither only at the end nor only at the beginning, but in each and all of the moments of the temporal flux, who is immanent to all and transcends all—a Divinity who is not a Supreme Being but that Mystery of Being, that dimension of Reality, that we ourselves certainly are not, who is above us, but also below, and also within us—according to St. Augustine's oft-repeated phrase *intimior intimo meo* (closer to me than I am to myself).

If there is a divine spark in the human being, then Man cannot be a mere link in a chain that will one day produce the Superman or lead to the Omega Point. If Man has personal dignity in himself, and not as a mere means for a "higher" end, then human life must have a possible, and full, meaning for the person who lives it. The dilemma is an ultimate one: either peace or war—either the possible harmony that enables everybody to discover and live what the Gospels call "eternal life," or the war rooted in the very foundation of reality. One must scale the peak of the pyramid or resign oneself to being "cannon fodder," an exploited laborer, a "damned mass,"⁵⁶ so that the construction may be carried on.

Both ways are open. Henry IV may have been right when he said, "Paris is well worth a mass," or perhaps Hitler was not so wrong, or those who dropped the atomic bomb! Perhaps peace is Man's last illusion, and we must open our eyes to the reality described by Kautilya, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Nietzsche, and so many others.

We have spoken of a fundamental option, and have indicated that, up to a certain point, that option is in our hands. And it is here that liberation theology's renowned "option for the poor" wins a cosmic-historical meaning that frequently has gone unrecognized. Such an option for the suffering element of humanity, on the part of those who have not been oppressed to the same extent, expresses a human solidarity of planetary proportions. It is not a matter of bourgeoisie or Marxism here, although these two words are capable of revealing something of the profound nucleus that we should like to discover. It is a matter of challenging the evolutionary cosmology, which seems to posit that, for the evolution of the species up to *Homo technologicus* (*et telematicus*), a "natural selection" is required (in this case an artificial one; or cultural, if you will) that will automatically eliminate those we call "poor," who are also called—significantly and sarcastically—"underdeveloped" because they have not been integrated into the rising movement toward the tip of the developmental pyramid, which can only be reached by the few.

Philosophical reflection still arises from Aristotelian "wonderment" or—the other way round—from *Vedantic* "disillusionment": wonderment at the contrast between what *is* (exploitation, "natural selection," etc.) and what Man thinks, dreams, and plans that *ought to be* (a human history distinct from the cosmic evolution). It implies, as well, a disillusionment at the sight of human suffering, since in Man a divine nucleus (the *ātman*) has been discovered—that goes the opposite way, far from the "illusion" of a false (*samsāric*) appearance of things.

⁵⁴ See Lk 13:23-24, etc.

⁵⁵ M. Bellet, *Le Dieu Pervers* (Paris: Desclée, 1979).

⁵⁶ A phrase taken from St. Augustine. [Ed. note.]

The option for the poor is tantamount to our rebellion in the face of all the blind forces of nature and history.⁵⁷ "Do you think that, when the Son of Man comes, he will find peace on earth?"⁵⁸

Perhaps it is now understandable why the quest for peace requires a cultural disarmament in greater breadth than the one we had originally proposed. A basic reflection on the problem of peace leads us to disquieting questions, which we must resolve first of all in ourselves, in order to be able to come to be seed—free agents—of a new project, cosmic, human, and divine, for the time in which we live. The problem of peace is a human question, and therefore a real one. Its very difficulty instills a serene joy, for it enables us, at least at the individual level, to live the Real and not the fictitious.

⁵⁷ The bibliography on the theology of liberation is now quite abundant, if still unknown to many thinkers and the world at large. Liberation theology itself has undergone a process of maturation and deepening. Arising out of a Christian conscience confronted by institutionalized injustice, being therefore justified or glossed over by the institutional churches (see G. Gutiérrez, *Teología de la liberación* [1973], and *La fuerza histórica de los pobres* [1982]; J. Pixley and C. Boff, *Opção pelos pobres* [1986]), it has attempted to develop a whole mythology (J. Sobrino, *Jesús en América Latina* [1982]; L. Boff, *Jesucristo el Liberador* [1983]; J. I. González Faus, *La humanidad nueva* [1984]), and a philosophy (E. Dussel, *Filosofía de la liberación* [1977]), and is now entering the phase of the rediscovery of its importance, e.g., by B. Gibellini, ed., *Le nuove frontiere della teología in América Latina* (Brescia: Queriniana, 1975); R. Forner-Betancourt, ed., *Verändert der Glaube die Wirtschaft?* (Freiburg: Herder, 1991), and I. Ellacuria and J. Sobrino, *Mysterium liberationis* (Madrid: Trotta, 1991).

⁵⁸ Paraphrasing Lk 18:8.

PATHWAYS TO PEACE

Keeping faithful to the title of this study, let us take one further step in its comprehension. Up until now we have been referring to a disarmament of the dominant culture, to a conversion of modern culture into a culture of peace and not war. Although competitive aggressiveness is a modern specialty, bellicosity is no monopoly of technocratic culture. Most cultures that have survived have frequently transgressed the principles of peace. Can it be that peaceful civilizations have been barred from history with impunity? We have said earlier that it is not a matter of idealizing the past, or seeking to return to it. While many of the wars of other cultures are predominantly ritual, the great empires of antiquity, on practically all continents, have practiced war; they have not been regimes of *pax humana*. Accordingly, the disarmament we long for is much more radical than a mere reduction of modern civilization's degree of bellicosity. We have spoken of a transformation, a metamorphosis. Our consideration is a more far-reaching one, and just because it is ambitious, it must be "humble," *humilis*, that is, clinging to the earth (*humus*) and Man (*homo*). Our perspective intends to embrace the experience of historical Man. Thus, after dealing with the past in the first section of this work, we have now taken the present into consideration.

Lessons from History

The current human situation is very serious, and the historical failures are sufficiently eloquent to justify these parameters. We must weigh the actual historical experience of humanity. What is there, or what has there been, in historical Man, that has created war as an institution? What confidence can we have in a society of States that spends an annual average of thirty thousand dollars per soldier and five hundred dollars per student?¹ When we realize that prehistoric Man, who felt threatened by nature, has given birth to historical Man, who is finally endangering the very life of the planet, we can—and must—wonder about the "Historical Man Project" itself, and examine his six thousand years' experience.

This means that the *magistra vitae*—life as our teacher—not only invites us to draw teachings from historical occurrences in particular, but teaches us that the moment has arrived to challenge the historical myth itself as a whole. The problem is the myth of History: whether the historical dimension constitutes Man exhaustively. And this, not because there is something beyond history, but because Man, even in his "*Dasein / being there*," is more than a historical being.

But lest we abandon the star that guides us in this pilgrimage, let us begin with the historical observation that we have repeatedly stated: victory never leads to peace. Peace is not the fruit of victory. This thesis can be defended from both a philosophical viewpoint

¹ Data as found in J. Clay, "Armed Struggle and Indigenous People," *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (1987): 2-4.

and a historical viewpoint. To the latter purpose, we possess documents that surely must figure among the most instructive in all the history of humanity, whereas they are virtually ignored: the peace treaties, from Hammurabi down to our own day. We possess thousands of historical documents testifying to the optimism of the victors when it comes to establishing *their* peace. All of them, naïvely and tragically, chant the same refrain: "Now at last we shall have peace." And they repeat that "this is the war that will end all wars." It is as if they wished to do away with history *historically*. But before the ink or clay is dry, their neighbors' spears or cannons are ready to contradict these declarations.²

These documents demonstrate the greatest human blindness that can be imagined, but also the greatest naïvete. We have now come to the point of saying that the "atomic deterrent" will do away with wars—or maybe the "Star Wars,"³ or the "new world order" based on the ideologies of a single victorious, and rootless, culture. One forgets that the vanquished (they themselves, their descendants, or the archetypes buried in the human subsoil) will rise up to settle accounts, and war will start all over again. We need only think of the American Indians, the Kurds, the Basques, the Jews, the Palestinians, and so on, throughout history. I repeat: victory never leads to peace—it leads to victory.

Even in the great mythologies of practically the whole world, the victory of the good (be they the Gods, or God, or believers) over evil never leads to peace. The road to peace is not victory, not even peaceful victory. Therefore, for a serious meditation on peace, this is the level at which we must begin.

There is no question of denying the goodwill of the victors, although some treaties have been terribly cruel. It is not only Hammurabi who slaughtered the vanquished. If we read Article 22 of the *Treaty of Versailles*, we wonder how it is possible for that to have been written in 1918–19.⁴ I repeat, a consideration on peace must study the experiences that humanity has had in these last six or seven thousand years. History shows us that victory has never led to peace, despite the efforts, goodwill, and conviction of those who defeated the Nazis, the Carthaginians, the Assyrians, or those "wicked folk who invaded us." Peace has never been attained in this fashion.⁵

It seems irresponsible, after six thousand years of historical experience, to be unwilling to pose once more the uncomfortable question of whether civilization itself might be off course. But if at this historical moment, we do not have the intellectual capacity and spiritual strength to pose the problem at this level, I doubt that we will be worthy of being called "intellectuals," "thinkers," or "responsible."

Einstein's remark rings in our ears: "With the splitting of the atom, everything has changed except the way we think." For years, I have been searching for the law of the inertia of the mind. The inertia of matter—since Kepler, Newton, and Einstein—can be more or less calculated. The inertia of the mind is much more ponderous. We continue to think, in science and history, in anachronistic categories that do not correspond to the current situation. Need all human civilization be warlike?

² See the voluminous and well-documented work by J. Fisch, *Krieg und Frieden im Friedensvertrag* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett, 1979).

³ Ed. note: US international defense strategy during the Reagan presidency in the 1980s; it then turned out to be just a propagandistic bluff.

⁴ Pope Benedict (*Benedetto*, literally: Blessed) XV was dubbed "Maledetto [Cursed] XV" for having dared, on August 1, 1917, before the end of World War I, to send a letter to all the belligerents urging them to accept a "just and lasting peace," and to abandon the "useless slaughter," instead of striving to achieve "victory." John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (April 11, 1963) recalls this letter in a note.

⁵ Cf., by way of example, the volumes of Amnesty International, *Informe* (Madrid: EDAL, 1988).

Surely we have improved a bit. Less than a century ago, one in every four Africans was a slave.⁶ Prisoners are no longer killed—although one can imagine what future generations in Iraq will have to suffer, without even knowing about Saddam Hussein, but they will have to suffer the consequences of the blockade and the defeat. To be sure, there are humanitarian laws and institutions that are intended to "soften the horrors of war." But, although Plautus's *vae victis!*⁷ is no longer popular, we still have not welcomed the vanquished at the table of peace instead of in the dock of the accused. If we did, then perhaps we should see that, if this is the way wars end, then it is not worth the trouble to start them. In practice, they would not even get started. The sentencing of enemies, and passing judgment upon them, belong precisely to the justification of war. But should we not have to learn from the last six thousand years of human experience? Peace is not attained by war.

What behooves us now is not to criticize peace treaties or to try to "humanize" war as much as we can. What behooves us now is to wonder about the way of thinking and the accepted institutions that have led us to this state of affairs. To reply that "this is the way things have always been" reveals that we have failed to understand both the seriousness of the current situation and the mutation to which humanity is being summoned. Peace is not achieved through a treaty, just as love is not deserved by decree. There is something in the nature of peace, just as in that of love, which is withdrawn from commandment. A whole view of Reality in general, and of Man in particular, is at stake.

It is not a matter of turning Man into an angel. (The angels, too, had their war.) But neither is it a matter of cowering behind the shield of original sin, and thinking that war is inevitable because we are sinners. We have recommended eliminating armies, not police. We have suggested the possibility of doing away with *automatic* means of destruction, not with spears and swords as effective symbols of authority. It is a matter of striking a middle course between the belief that Man is good (so that anarchism would be the answer) and the belief that Man is bad (and that one must defend oneself at all cost). Let us not forget that the culture of "certitude," inaugurated in the West by Descartes, leads logically to a civilization of "security," the prevailing ideology in modern society. To live in insecurity and uncertainty is intolerable for rationality, but it is even pleasant in love. Saint Augustine calls peace *incertum bonum*, the uncertain good.⁸ It is better to place one's trust in Reality—which to a large extent means placing it in ourselves—than to place it in our powerful "betters." "Who will watch the watchers?"

We entertain these considerations in order to indicate how far cultural disarmament goes beyond a readiness to listen and to be tolerant. The disarmament to which the world situation urges us, under pain of apocalyptic catastrophe, is a cultural mutation for which the wisest persons of our era are already striving.

Reconciliation

If it is not victory that leads us to the attainment of peace, what will enable us to find it? I repeat what I have often said: only reconciliation leads to peace.

"Reconciliation" comes from *concilium*, and is akin to *ecclesia*: convoking the others and everyone, speaking with others. Reconciliation itself presents a tripartite structure. First there are the two parties in confrontation: man/woman, right/left, rich/poor, Catholics/Protestants, believers/nonbelievers, capitalists/noncapitalists, whites/blacks, introverts/

⁶ *Weekly Mail*, January 3, 1992.

⁷ "Woe to the vanquished!"

⁸ See I. Lana, *L'idea della pace nell'antichità*, op. cit., 155ff.

extroverts, and so on. But there is a third party as well, which is the object of the dispute: a child, reason, a territory, power, truth, or anything else.

Here we find ourselves faced with a triadic problem, with two possibilities for a solution.

a. The very old method of the scapegoat seems to fall short.⁹ (The scapegoat may be Poland, or Abyssinia, or a child in a divorce, or money, etc.) The scapegoat does not solve the problem; it is only a provisional step, taken by the rival parties until it is completely eliminated. (Will Europe be the scapegoat between Russia and America? Or Japan between Europe and the United States?) A scapegoat serves for the moment: "*We* will keep quiet about what is going on in Afghanistan or Poland, and *you* stop your maneuvering in Nicaragua or Chile."

This procedure does not lead to solutions, because the scapegoat cannot be totally annihilated. And then our first principle applies: a victory over the scapegoat will never lead to peace. The crucified rise again.

The blacks of Africa have been scapegoats for centuries. We need only think of Bartolomé de Las Casas and that historic, nearly unbelievable tragedy in which, out of mercy toward the American natives, between 15 and 45 million African blacks (20 percent of whom died en route) were brought over to work in their place. Charles V's laws of 1542 on human rights are among the most perfect ever promulgated. But they availed little, because the mighty found ways to sidestep them.

The pact between two powerful figures—Herod and Pilate, for example¹⁰—to murder a third party does not lead to peace. The problem is not solved: it does defend the winners, but does not leave them in peace. It cannot be forgotten; one cannot go on acting as if nothing had happened. History, too, has a memory. There is a law of *karman*: we cannot kill, crucify, conquer, eliminate others, and afterward think that we are at peace. This is an ultimate, fundamental problem.

It is also a religious problem. Reconciliation cannot occur if we "offload" it onto a third party, even if this third party is not a person.

A current example, a grave and tragic one, is precisely our current scapegoat: matter (the Earth in general, and the atom in particular). Our era has perpetrated what I call a "cosmic abortion." I use this expression in order to place in evidence the extent to which the modern West has lost its sensitivity. We are extremely sensitive to a mother choosing to have a physiological abortion, which, of course, is an extremely serious problem. But who in the West has had the sensitivity—despite the cry of nearly all of the world's cultures, which we seek to marginalize as "folklore"—to perceive that to open the womb of matter (to split the atom) is a cosmic abortion of catastrophic proportions? We are cutting ourselves off more and more from the rest of the world, including animals. We have lost the sensitivity for communication. The atom is the scapegoat we use to maintain our standard of living. We need more energy because we have upset the rhythms of the Earth. For every Italian, for example (here the statistics are known), there is a ton of nuclear waste. And if Chernobyl warns us of a danger, we simply think up a power plant that is a little more secure. This is the technocratic mentality: to look for *solutions* without ever going to the *causes*. Thus, it

⁹ See R. Girard, *La violence et le sacré* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1972), and *La route antique des hommes pervers* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1985), along with many reactions to the former work. "There is no cheating violence, except by closing off every outlet or giving it something to chew on" (*La violence*, 17). His theory could be summed up in his asseveration: "Sacrifice is violence without risk of vengeance" (*ibid.*, 29).

¹⁰ Lk 23:12.

appears that no one truly wishes to denounce the cosmic abortion that represents a crime of "lese-materiality." We declare war on Earth, and pretend that there is peace among peoples. Matter, too, rises again. Peace is a cosmic reality as well.

To think only of solutions of security is to repeat once more the reaction that we have found in the peace treaties: the one with the sword is opposed by a spear, and the one who wields a simple shield, by a more complicated one; the one with a first-alert system is opposed by an electronic jammer; a missile with one warhead, by one with a dozen; when criminality is on the rise, more police; and so on and on. But peace is not attained in this way.

This is the mechanistic schema of thinking—the hydraulic schema, we might say (we have to bring the water level back up)—thereupon reinforced by the physical law of action and reaction. In this schema, "breaker pays." Here is the *lex talionis*, the law of the reestablishment of order on the basis of inflicting equivalent injury.

It is significant that this manner of thinking, in its Jewish and ancient Roman forms, prevailed for centuries in Christian theology, in spite of the Sermon on the Mount and the doctrines of the Master of Nazareth. We are referring not only to canon law or the history of the church, but to the "talionistic" interpretation of one of the most fundamental Christian dogmas: the so-called Redemption. A God who is the agent of distributive justice, and the simple custodian of a Supreme Law, requires reparation and restitution for the disobedience that has violated order and transgressed commandment. God hands over Jesus to be the "vicarious" victim for all humanity. He is the scapegoat. The debt must be paid.¹¹

b. The other possibility likewise acknowledges the three elements. Here, however, the third element is not of a lower order (the expiatory victim) but of a higher one (acknowledgment of transcendence). The two rival parties agree, not to pay a price, to avenge themselves on a third party, to come to a compromise, but to forgive each other. Forgiveness is unintelligible in the mechanistic schema of thinking. This second possibility might perhaps be called a "vitalist schema." If a sheep has been stolen, it can be returned. If a conquest has occurred, restitution can be made. But if a child has died, the parents cannot be compensated. And if innocence has been lost, it cannot be recovered. The punishment of the guilty party does not satisfy for sin. Only forgiveness erases sin.

But in order to have forgiveness, there must be the active or passive intervention of this third element, which transcends the conflictive situation. It would be tempting here to perform an exegesis of one of the Christian texts that speaks most explicitly of peace. Were we to have meditated upon it more, not only would the Redemption have acquired another meaning, but the relationship between Christianity and other religions would have taken on a less tragic nature. We mean the text of *John* on the risen Christ. When Jesus appears to his disciples, he gives them peace, and at once breathes into them the

¹¹ It is worth observing, as a theological explanation in contrast with St. Anselm's theory, that Hugo of Saint Victor (in the twelfth century) spoke not of a "redemption" but of a "restoration." With a view to recalling this fundamental aspect of Christian tradition, and rehabilitating the mystical Scholasticism of the Victorines, I take the liberty of quoting this: "There are two works in which all things that have been made are contained. The first is the work of creation. The second is the work of restoration.... The work of creation is that by which the things that were-not came into existence.... The work of restoration is that by which the then-dead things became better [than before]" (*De Sacramentis Christianae Fidei* I.prologue.9.2). He calls creation *conditio*, that is, foundation, and calls redemption *gratia creatrix*, creative grace (*ibid.*, I.6.17).

Holy Spirit that will be able to forgive or not forgive.¹² For reconciliation, there must be this third energy.

Strictly speaking, the "dialectic" of forgiveness is a "tria-lectic." No one can simply forgive another person. This would be to arrogate to oneself a superiority that would only constitute a new affront to the "enemy." Forgiveness can be mutual only when its source is transcendent to those who have offended one another, or struggle with one another. The emperor can see to the reconciliation of two kings in combat, but no sovereign State can forgive an equally sovereign State. Such forgiveness can neither be given nor accepted. No international level can guarantee peace, unless some type of supranational authority is accepted. This is one of our current problems. Individuals and families can also forgive when they acknowledge a higher instance. Sovereign States must proclaim themselves "infallible" where their high sovereignty is concerned. An increasing awareness of supranational rights, and of crimes against humanity, opens the door to a more lasting state of peace. Democracy cannot justify or rule everything.

This awareness cannot be the result of an accord struck by a given number of States. It must arise spontaneously as a myth accepted by all. There is no need of special laws or military vigilance in order not to practice cannibalism. And if slavery were once more to be institutionalized somewhere, a certain universal consensus would condemn it.

We have an example of this transcendence (unacknowledged by President Bush when he declared, on the eve of the 1992 Conference of Rio de Janeiro, that he was not going to put ecological questions ahead of "national interests") in the ecological awareness that is spreading across humanity. There is a third instance, the Earth, superior to the particular interests of particular nations or industries. The word "superior" indicates that it is also to the benefit of the warring parties to acknowledge this upper level. On these grounds, I have taken the liberty of coining the word "ecosophy" to denote the wisdom of the Earth itself. In true reconciliation, there are neither victors nor vanquished. All come out winners, because the Whole, of which we make up a part, is respected. Unfortunately, our times have neglected education in forgiveness and reconciliation. The right to reconciliation is a human right. Man has a right to forgiveness.¹³ Justice is more than a series of rules for maintaining a status quo.¹⁴

What we have been saying is in no way meant to suggest a merely sentimental conception of forgiveness. Forgiveness is not opposed to justice, but is an integral part of it. Justice does not consist in returning to the status quo ante, as if reality were not living and dynamic. It is not "redemption" but *renewal*, as we have said. Accordingly, in the political order, it is not simply a matter of making the guilty party "pay for it," or of punishing transgressors of a certain rule, but of creating a new order of things.¹⁵

¹² Jn 20:21-23.

¹³ It is instructive, and somewhat alarming, to see how little the profound meaning of forgiveness and reconciliation has been studied. Dictionaries of philosophy, for example, leave it practically out of account, and those of theology reduce it to an explanation on the sacrament of penance.

¹⁴ For further clarification, see A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (London: Duckworth, 1981); and *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (London: Duckworth, 1988).

¹⁵ Referring to the political order, A. Jacques ("Impunité et fausses paix," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, [September 1992], 32) writes, "Forgiveness excuses nothing. It delivers the victim of an obsession from his or her torment and resentment, while the guilty party is called upon to be transformed after having repented."

Dialogue

How is reconciliation achieved? I would like to use a word that has become very popular nowadays: "dialogue"—the dialogue with the *other*, with the one we call "enemy." It is not about a *dialectical* dialogue, though, but about what I have called "dialogical dialogue."¹⁶ One must tirelessly pursue efforts to speak, to understand, and to make oneself understood, in order to open oneself to dialogical existence. What happens here is akin to what occurs with the alcoholic. His problem is not drinking, but nor being able to want not to drink. The problem is not the enemy, but not being able to want to deal with them. The interruption of dialogue means solipsism and death because life itself is an ongoing dialogical dialogue. The other party always has something to say. I am not the only window on the world, nor does my "I" exist without a "you" and the whole gamut of personal pronouns.

Dialogue is a science as well as an art. It involves the science of knowing both oneself (including what one thinks and wants) and the other. It is the science that knows that neither of these two cognitions is exhaustive, neither for me nor for the other. Dialogue is a very much neglected science in our days, in which the *trivium* of classical education has come to be looked down on as "trivial." Education to peace spans the whole education in thinking, speaking, and reasoning: Logic (dialectics), Grammar, and Rhetoric. Someone closed to dialogue can be as good a strategist and as astute as one could wish, but generally speaking is illiterate when it comes to the *trivium*. He doesn't know how to speak or discuss or, ultimately, to think, regardless of the number of his calculations and forecasts. That shows how underdeveloped the cultural level of the "developed countries" is.

But dialogue is also an art, a doing, an activity, a *praxis*. Man has a "playful" nature, and the human game par excellence is the one we play with language. Conversation involves not only being "versed" in something, but also "re-verting" to the other in order to find a "vertical" line toward which we may "con- verge" without "sub-versions" or "per-versions" of any kind, because we shall be "ad-verted" not to be "in-vertebrates," and thereby remain capable of "tra-versing" any "re- versal that might" "tergi-versate" our "di- vergencies." Someone will say we are trying hard to be funny. Well, without humor, there is scant hope for peace, both for the individual and for humanity.

A great deal has been written in our days on the intercultural dialogue. And although much has improved, the table of dialogue has not generally been a roundtable. Let us not forget that the title of the legendary King Arthur was *Dux bellorum*, Leader of Wars, and that only his knights were admitted to the illustrious table. It has been too hastily (pre) supposed that the "other" cultures should adapt to *our* table, where we eat with the knife of dollars and the English fork, on the tablecloth of democracy (understood *our* way), on plates served up by the State, drinking the wine of progress, and using the spoons of technological development, while we sit on the chairs of History. I do not thereby wish to say that dialogue should be conducted seated on the floor, eating with our hands, drinking only water, and speaking Chinese. But I do say that it is a fundamental mistake to try to get everyone to sit at one table where the Anglo-Saxon (just to give it a name) language is the most practical.

What we need are "duo-logues" that may then evolve into "multiloquies" among the various peoples of the Earth (each with their neighbor, to begin with). Selling goods at a "single price" may have its advantages, but the myth of the single model ought to be demythologized. The modern mentality, coined by scientism, has atrophied our sense of the uniqueness of every being and every situation. Dialogue is not a "mass meeting" at which, however, only

¹⁶ See my "The Dialogical Dialogue," in F. Whaling, ed., *The World's Religious Traditions* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1984), 201–21. Now in Volume VI, Part 2 of this *Opera Omnia*.

those speak who have a microphone and know demagogic. It is a human act, on a human scale, and with a human voice, in which people forge their humanness by discussing with words their divergencies.

Perhaps, before sitting down to the table, we should "pray," that is, invoke Something higher so that It/He may unite us—thereby acknowledging some transcendence, which precisely makes us equally worthy, and that will enable us to find the right language for each case.¹⁷

For all of this, wisdom is needed. Wisdom is the art that transforms destructive tensions into creative polarities, and this not by strategy, in order to "get the better of it," but because this polarity constitutes the very essence of Reality. Polarity is not dualism, is not binary, since it is not grounded on the dialectic of contradiction between the two poles, as each pole presupposes the other. Polarity is trinitarian. Otherwise, the two poles would cease to be poles: they would fuse together or totally separate. This is what occurs in dialogal dialogue among persons, since nobody is a self-sufficient monad. It is not a dialogue for reaching a solution, but a dialogue for *being*, since *I am* not without the other. *Esse est co-esse*.¹⁸

That means that, despite all obstacles, the road to peace consists in wanting to walk it. The wish of peace is pacifying in itself. Fanaticisms and absolutisms prevent people from traveling together, because they make us believe ourselves self-sufficient, or the absolute owners of Truth.

In brief, the integral peace of the person—both within and without—is an imperative for the entire humanity. The theory of evolution supposes the survival of the strongest, but modern technocracy has armed the weakest too, so that the alternative is now the struggle of all against all, which leads to a mutual destruction. We urgently need a new anthropology.

Each Man has a *right* to peace insofar as he has it as a *duty*. A change in one's personal microcosm is the cause and the effect of a change in the macrocosm of humankind. In this do our responsibility and our dignity lie.

*Si vis pacem, para te ipsum.*¹⁹

¹⁷ See Lk 21:14–15.

¹⁸ "Being is being-with."

¹⁹ "If you want peace, prepare yourself."

Part 3

THE CHURCH AS A COUNCIL

*Si quis ergo in Cristo, nova creatura:
vetera transierunt, ecce, facta sunt nova.*

*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature:
old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

2 Cor 5:17

This lemma is not intended to dress up my subject, but to serve as a symbol for all that I will be saying.¹ And it could not be more traditional!²

The Spirit blows when and how it chooses. Any kind of limitation is in itself a sin against the Spirit. This sentence is so universal as to be accepted more or less without question. Christians, however, affirm that this spirit is the Spirit of Christ—though without defining it explicitly in its Trinitarian sense, that is, without subordinating the Spirit to Christ, or even separating the two. However, although no one presumes to dictate the paths of the Spirit, Christians believe they have the authority to delimit the scope of action of the Risen Christ.

¹ This article originates from two lectures: one held in the Parish Community of St. Thomas Aquinas in the University City of Madrid and another that was published later in *Tiempo de Hablar*, no. 56/57 (Madrid) (1993). The author has dealt with the same theme in other writings, e.g., "Es universal el lenguaje cristiano?" in *Los caminos inexahauribles de la palabra: Homage to J. Severino Croatto* (Buenos Aires: Lumen ISEDET, 2000), 585–607; "Sobre la universalidad de la iglesia" and "El sueño de una iglesia India," chapters of *The New Innocence* (Estella: Divine Word, 1993), 252–97, etc. In order to not overload this article with notes I have included only citations and avoided referring the reader to other of my writings that explain what is merely mentioned here. This paper has in part preserved the conversational style of the above-mentioned conferences.

² See Mt 9:17, 13:52; Jn 3:5; 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:5. See Gal 6:15; also Mk 1:27; Lk 22:20; Jn 13:34; Eph 2:15; Rev 2:17, and similat.

Christians fought for the freedom of religion and expression until they gained power, and as soon as they did, things changed. As early as in the fourth century they went from being the persecuted to the persecutors. Theologians speculate on the novel aspect of Christianity compared to all other religions. Once Christ is put in power, it seems that everything else comes to an end and the theological task consists merely in repeating and imitating. A large part of theology has been reduced to archaeology, to delving into the beginnings and extracting more or less logical deductions, as if life consisted not in novelty or surprise but merely in deduction.

The example of creation is significant. Present-day theologians, influenced by modern science, seem to interpret it as an act of the past, substantially in opposition to or in harmony with the scientists' Big Bang, forgetting the doctrine of *creatio continua* that was upheld from Origen³ to Scholasticism. Theology is not pure exegesis, but the practical intelligence of faith. Christianity is not a religion of the book but of the Word, the living Word, the *Logos* incarnate—who, paradoxically, left us with mere traces of his discourses so we would not be tempted to identify him with the brilliant words he might have spoken.

The following reflections arise from the lifelong meditation of one who has tried to obey, that is, to heed, the *oxymoron* of the "perfect flaw of liberty."⁴

* * *

Summing up: the Spirit makes all things new; it renews the face of the earth.⁵ And the church is not excluded from this constant renewal. Yesterday's church is no longer of use today, much less tomorrow. Tradition is lived by passing it on, and it is passed on by transforming it, following the breath of the Spirit.

The church will be how Christians make it. And they will try to make it as they believe it should be. There are, however, many different beliefs within the same church, within the same creed. Conflict is natural both to Man and to the church. The ideal is neither oneness nor uniformity, but harmony in polarity. The church should be the *agorá* of dialogue, the place of reconciliation (which is the meaning of "council") and the natural setting for the *coincidentia oppositorum*.

There are many concepts and many models of the church. The central metaphor is that of being a body that is mystical or mystic, cosmic or sociological, historical or modern, and so on. Perhaps we can say that the various divergent opinions all agree that the church is the liturgical community, where liturgy means the effort of the people to build, within the cosmotheandric undertaking, a reality that is better, more beautiful, more just, where there is naturally room for different interpretations.

Our contribution toward the building of the church is determined by cultural and personal parameters, and from this derives the pluralism that is necessary from both the point of view of concepts and praxis.

Only a Universal Council, which should not be either solely Christian or exclusively human but include all the earth, could serenely converge human efforts toward what the Gospels call the kingdom of heaven and its justice. The situation, both that of humans and that of the planet, calls for such an open-minded initiative. We are currently at one of the lowest ebbs of human history, precisely—and paradoxically—because we are coming to realize that, as the saying goes, "to great evils, great remedies."

³ *De principiis* I.4.5.

⁴ Jas 1:25.

⁵ Ps 104:30.

This Council cannot be a tower of Babel for the unification of humanity. This is the temptation of so-called globalization. To overcome the temptation we need a point of transcendence, both objective (the Divine by any of its names) and subjective (faith as the transcendent reality that is expressed in the most varied beliefs). The agenda cannot be developed either a priori or for just one of its parts. It is the dialogical dialogue that is constantly in progress and constantly being realized. The great issues of humanity (hunger, war, injustice, the economic system, science and technology) are, after all, ultimate human questions of life and death and, as such, are religious questions.

Christian Churches in general, and the Roman Catholic Church in particular, cannot neglect this obligation toward humanity. Concentrating on this will give us the proper perspective for resolving minor conflicts that are less urgent but equally important.

The theme is threefold, and by this I mean that it is unique from three different aspects: the human situation (and that of the world, which cannot be separated from it), the problem of Christianity in general, and the Catholic Church in particular.

It would be presumptuous even to attempt to give a complete answer. I can only echo the poets, who have the charisma of words.

Antonio Machado writes,

*Hombre de España: ni el pasado ha muerto ni está el mañana—ni el ayer—escrito.*⁶

Man of Spain: the past is not dead, neither is tomorrow—or yesterday—written.

And I would add:

*Man of the Church: the past is not the norm
nor is tomorrow—or yesterday—fixed.
Today's creation is as new
as yesterday's is surprising
and tomorrow's is open.*

And, taking the first part of the question further, along the lines of the Castilian poet,

*Caminante, no hay camino—
(Pilgrim, there is no journey)
because the journey is the end,
and once you discover it
you must go back and start again.*

Put simply, the laws of science do not apply to the Spirit.

I cannot give a complete answer to the problem, first of all because I do not feel I have the authority to do so. If I have criticized a theological reflection that is directly aimed at the past, I have all the more reason to criticize a futuristic theology. "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof"—and likewise for theology.

Second, for a philosophical reason: I do not believe in the dichotomy between "must-be" and "to be." If "to be" is a verb, that is to say, to act, and Being is what it is, from where would this must-be come to Being? What is this "before Being," which dictates to Being what it must be? Could it be, then, that this must-be is true Being? I am well aware that I must be careful not to stray down these paths, but at the same time I cannot help but note

⁶ *Poesías completas* (Madrid, 1983), 82.

that Westerners, including Christians, continue to be disciples of Parmenides (Thinking and Being) and devotees of Socrates (the Concept).

The meaning of the problem raised emerges from the painful question of the destiny of mankind and thus also of the church. I limit myself to the scope of the church as it is inscribed within the circle of humanity—albeit often with the pain of change. The church is the heart of the world, the “Fathers” used to say, when the heart was the symbol of love and not of power.

I consider three points, which in turn I divide into three parts.

THE DESTINY OF THE CHURCH

*Wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church.
Epistle to the Smyrnaeans 8:1 (PG 5.713)*

The Church Will Be as Christians Make It

There are few things as heavy as inertia of the mind—or, in other words, dialectical materialism. And while the behavior of matter as seen by science is now recovering its degrees of freedom, the behavior of the mind still seems to be held fast in the grip of logical laws, albeit statistical and sociological. The real future is not the conclusion of a syllogism whose premises lie in the past, however heavy the weight of history may be. "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."¹ Let me start by saying that yesterday's Church is no longer of use today. If living with your face turned to the past is nostalgic sentimentality, looking always to the future is alienation from the present and also from tomorrow. I should also add, however, that the Church of tomorrow is not needed to bring consolation to the Church of today. "Today you will be with me in paradise."² Hope does not lie in the future, but in the invisible.

We know that the Church is not the stones of the building, but we still seem to think that it is the institutions—or, even worse, the concepts. St. Peter speaks (as also does a Buddhist parable) of living stones.³ And life is constantly new.

The worst thing about created interests is not that they are interests, but that they do not leave room for new ones. The poor in spirit are those who have no created interests.

When tradition becomes a burden, it ceases to be tradition, in the sense of something that, in its lightness, is conveyed and passed on to others, and as it is passed on it is transformed. This is why it must be light,⁴ because otherwise it ceases to be tradition and becomes *tradere*, betrayal, as in "handing over": it ceases to be a *traditio*, which in itself is still a *traductio*, a "transferring," and turns those who "bind heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders"⁵ into *traditores*. If tradition is not diffused, like Mary Magdalene's perfume, it turns into betrayal, like the scandal of Judas.⁶ Tradition is there to be *tradita* (from *tradere*, transmit),

¹ Jn 16:33.

² Lk 23:43.

³ 1 Pet 2:4-5.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Mt 23:4.

⁶ Jn 12:4.

that is, passed on from hand to hand, transgressed if viewed from the past, surpassed if from the future. This does not mean that if one completely abandons tradition there can be no "handing over." But the jar of perfume must be broken; indeed, the very word "tradition" betrays us since it can also be betrayal.⁷ Let this be a word of caution to "traditionalists." The Church of the twenty-first century, like humanity, must be built. And the evidence of this fact is the most important *rightful* ecclesiological truth. It is not the force of inertia that directs the Church, but the Holy Spirit. Yet the Holy Spirit as Wisdom dictates everything gently by inspiring our free will.⁸

What I am saying is that this Church is in our hands. I speak in the plural without excluding either the Supreme Pontiff or the poor widow of the alms box.⁹ And here lies the difficulty. "God made all things good in their time, and gave the world to disputing of them."¹⁰ Or as Muslims comment: the world belongs to God, but He has leased it to the most courageous. We should not define the *Pantocrator* of the first creeds as an All-Powerful Being in the metaphysical sense—this is an inadequate translation. The ferocious individualism of the modern Western and Westernized world makes it difficult to experience freedom beyond the limits of the individual. It takes historical catastrophes to make us aware of our collective responsibility.

And this introduces my next two points.

We Will Make the Church as We Think It Is

The Church, as a second creation, is by no means the exclusive work of our hands, and neither is our biography, even though we are free.

If the Church is not also our creation, it will never be ours and we will always be part of it as mercenaries, as some bureaucrats are. Did not Paul say we are *synergoi*, coworkers with God?¹¹

The more spontaneous creation is and the more we freely let it emerge unhindered from the breath of the Spirit, the more it will belong to Christ, and therefore the more it will reflect his true face and also his bond with the past—without fear of death. "It is better for you that I go away." Christ left no written testament; he left us the Spirit.

Does not the whole gospel and all the apostles repeatedly say that we are children of God, that his legacy is ours by right, since everything that is of the Father is ours?

If we believe that the Church is a multinational body, and if we are lucky, we will contribute to the creation of the spiritual multinational of the century. For this there will be no lack of money.

If we believe in a clerical Church we will try to reform its structures with clerics who are more approachable and of both sexes.

If we believe the Church is God's people, we will concentrate our efforts in this direction, abandoning the others to their fate or obliging them to come forward and be chosen.

If we believe the Church is the local Church we will move toward its creation, and so on.

If we believe that "we also are the Church"¹² we will work toward making it more human, more pleasant and inclusive—which does not mean without hierarchy. If we believe that

⁷ See Mt 26:21; 1 Cor 11:23, etc.

⁸ See Wis 8:1.

⁹ The place in the Temple of Jerusalem where the treasure and offerings were kept.

¹⁰ Eccles 3:11.

¹¹ 1 Cor 3:9; Col 4:11.

¹² *Petro Damiani, Sermon 72, Nos utique sumus Ecclesia, in Dedicatione Ecclesiae* (PL 144.909) [Lubac, 272].

"the Holy Catholic Church is the beginning of everything"¹³—that is, believe in the "cosmic mystery of the Church," then our Christian vocation will embrace all humanity.

If we believe that the first Church, the spiritual one, was created before the sun and the moon,¹⁴ then our ecclesial consciousness will be cosmic, and so on.

Yet it seems that even we ourselves do not have such firm convictions, and most of all, we know that within the same community many different creeds can be found.

Faith is not the same thing as creed. Faith is a constitutive dimension of Man that gives him the awareness that his being is not finite, but in-finite, open, and this openness we can call transcendence. Faith is composed of many different beliefs and a variety of different religions. This is not, however, the subject we are dealing with here.

Within the Catholic Church, faith itself is polysemic. And here lies the difficulty.

Who creates the twenty-first-century Church? Us, you, or them?

This is the problem.

There is no doubt that Man is not alone at the helm of history. To continue the metaphor, there are many different types of helm, some boats are powerful and others less so, and above all, winds vary enormously. We have Providence, or Azar, or Fatality, but also human freedom, however mediated it may be. We come back to this later.

We Will Build the Church According to the Impulse of Our Faith

Perhaps it would be better to speak of the dynamism of our faith. This means, of course, talking about our power, prestige, money, or political strategy, but we cannot neglect to speak of this faith, which, though it does not allow us to move mountains, it does motivate our actions and our hearts. There is a human factor in the march of history, and an important part of this factor is the faith we put in our lives and our ideals.

It is often said that every population has the government it deserves. I would not be so harsh, but I would say that it has the government it tolerates. A similar thing can be said of the Church.

Clement of Alexandria defined faith as the audacity of life. Sociologists, moreover, would tell us in unison that the raw material of any society is society itself. We might wonder, then, whether the Spanish Catholics are as they are because they are Catholic or because they are Spanish. There are Indian Catholics whose Catholicism, and not just the color of their skin, is different from that of Spaniards.

If the Church of tomorrow will be built, and it will be built in the way people choose to build it, these people must be asked to take upon themselves both the cross and the joy of building it. If we choose to leave politics in the hands of political bureaucrats, how can we then complain? If we choose to leave the Church in the hands of the few, why do we then not console ourselves with the only right we have—that of complaining?

Justifying ourselves by saying that we are not allowed is a juvenile excuse (and besides, adolescents have already learned to do the things their parents have forbidden them to do).

It follows that the Church depends not only on the idea we have of it, the theory, but also on the praxis.

Generally speaking, academic theology is reduced to theory. Praxis has split away from a large part of theology. As I explain later, the crucible of reflection and theological practice is liturgy.

¹³ St. Epiphanius, *Pansarion* 1.1c . . . 5 (PG 41.181) [Lubac, 178].

¹⁴ St. Clement, Second Epistle to the Corinthians 14:1.

I will not dwell on this now, however. There are books on the subject, which criticize the clerical childishness, the many centuries of "posotism"¹⁵ of and the cynicism of which more than a few pastors are guilty. The Church is not an *entelechia* but a human reality, and as such has as great a capacity for humanity as any other institution. The "Church Fathers" were well aware of this when they called it the *casta meretrix*, or "chaste whore," as is summed up in the more than one hundred pages of the remarkable study by Hans Urs von Balthasar.

We must understand the discouragement of many Christians, and even more so we must comprehend the discouragement of the Kurds, the despair of the Burmese, the terror of the Quechuas, the pain of the gypsies, the fury of the Naga, the disheartenment of the Afghans, and the indignation of the Palestinians. We are not in a worse situation.¹⁶ Did Jesus not teach us through his example that when a law is unjust it should simply be ignored (as when he said that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath)?¹⁷ And he paid for it with his life. If the Church is merely a recreation club, it is not worth taking the trouble or the risk. *Intelligenti pauca!*

¹⁵ Passivity.

¹⁶ Jn 16:33.

¹⁷ Mk 2:27.

DIFFERENT ECCLESIOLOGIES

*Non inquietare eos, qui ex gentibus
convertuntur ad Deum.*

*Do not trouble those from among the Gentiles
who are turning to God*

Acts 15:19

Conflict Is Rooted in Human Nature and the Church

I do not describe here my personal ecclesiology or how I think the Church of the coming century "should be." I have already said that "having to be" is subsidiary to Being, not to particular entities. For this reason I have insisted that the fate of the Church is in the hands of everyone. I shall expound my opinions, but first it must be very clear that I have to combine them, to varying degrees of harmony, with other conceptions of the Church. While I am not fond of the dominant monolithic ecclesiology, I cannot be sure that others do not find my own idea of the Church (of which I am convinced) dangerous or even wrong. If I begin with a phenomenological description of what the Church is to me, I would say that it is precisely the *agorà* where the community can live side by side and where even the most diverse opinions can be peacefully expressed. Were it not for the reigning cultural superficiality, it would not be necessary to emphasize that these are fundamental opinions on the meaning of life and not merely technological problems. What was debated in the classic *agorà* were the so-called dogmas. Nations make wars when their disagreements reach the limit; this is true also of commercial companies, though in another way. The Church, by its nature, is the *agorà* of peace. And since peace is not the tedious calm of monotony, the Church is the natural place of dialogue. Does it not claim to provide a transcendental point of reference, which, in principle, could be the common ground on which the most diverse opinions might begin to dialogue? When I say "transcendental" I am referring to a point that lies beyond all conceptualization. Hence, the only requirement for dialogue is that it must be sought. However, one can understand why the atheist, the Jain, or the Buddhist, for example, would resist an a priori assumption of a certain conception of God. It follows, therefore, that without the mystical dimension dialogue is impossible.

The conflict of ecclesiologies belongs neither to the present nor to the past. It is not only latently present but also well established as far back as in the days of the Apostles—and the Council of Jerusalem I itself refers to it.¹

I would say, then, following the most ancient tradition, that this conflict is inherent to both human nature and to the very constitution of the Church.² The human ideal is neither uniqueness nor unanimity but diversity and harmony. Reality is polar, and the Trinity is its maximum exponent: What we must learn is not to let polarity degenerate into tension or, worse yet, into war or the despotic dominance of one pole over the other.

One of the weaknesses of modernity, for which we are today paying a high price, is its incapacity to tackle radical diversity, that is, uncertainty and insecurity. Descartes was obsessed with certainty and has infected all modern society with his fear, which he defined as paranoia about security. However, it appears that reason cannot offer certainty, nor can rules or money provide security. One of the most aberrant impacts of modernity within the Church is the obsession with the certainty of beliefs, that is, with infallibility—and I am not just talking about the pope, who is merely a symptom. And every psychologist knows that the fear of making a mistake can be more insidious than the mistake itself. It is a logical consequence of the monotheism of reason.

We have here another example of the influence of ideas in general and philosophy in particular on praxis, both civil and religious. Feeling the need for certainty is understandable in an existence dominated by reason, but not in a life driven by love—and faith.

The Center of the Church Is Liturgy

We might sum up the different conceptions of the Church by saying that the central metaphor of ecclesiology is that of the body: a mystical and sociological body, as cosmic and mystic as it is historical and political. Some eras have accentuated one aspect more than the other, and we have ecclesiologies to suit all tastes. These conceptions are not always mutually compatible, however, which brings about the need for dialogical dialogue and the acceptance of pluralism.

To avoid tarrying in no-man's-land, however, I do not dwell on these points here but straightforwardly present my schema of the Church:

The Church is the liturgical community. Though this brief definition would need a lengthy explanation, I shall limit myself to clarifying the meaning I give to the words:

Liturgy is the cosmotheandric action of a people—in other words, the actions and acts with which, in living its life, a people builds its world, striving to make it better, more beautiful, and above all, more just.

In calling this action *cosmotheandric* I mean that in it, the Divine, the World, and the Man are the three factors that are essential to the synergy, cooperation, and construction of this reality that Man has the task of configuring. Every integral human action is a liturgical action in which the Divine, the Human, and the Material intervene. Let us not impoverish our symbols. This conception of cult (liturgy) has been prevalent since ancient times—though it is often shrouded in superstition and ritualism. "If the Brahman did not perform the *agni-hotra* in the morning, that day the sun would not rise," says a Vedic text. The magic consists in interpreting that which expresses a cosmic correlation as a physical cause.

Without a people there can be no liturgy, or *leit-ourgia*: the work, *ergon*, of the people, *laos* (the *orgia* was a secret form of cult that later degenerated into the *orgy*; *orgiazo* meant to

¹ Acts 15:1ff.

² Jn 21:18.

celebrate mysterious rites). Many assemblies of African tribes that gather together to clarify and decide on the life of the community are liturgic; a true parliament can be a liturgy—what certain magnates do in Brussels may not be. *Ecclesia* is the convocation of the people to gather together. In prayer, *lex orandi lex credendi* is more than simply asking, and believing is more than just lucubrating. "If we know what prayer is," said Origen, "we must not pray to any created Being, not to Christ himself, but only to God, the Father of all."³

Christian liturgy is that in which such actions are presided over by Jesus Christ. This "presidency" implies his presence, and this presence is the Eucharist. The Eucharist implies faith. This faith is the belief in his presence. And with this we complete the circle—not the vicious, but the vital circle—of the liturgy. A number of grassroots communities have rediscovered this.

I have said that the Church is the grassroots community in action, the action of keeping together heaven and earth—the *lokasamgraha* of the *Bhagavad-gita*⁴—or, in Christian terms, building the kingdom of God and his Righteousness.⁵ This experience of community life takes place in the present, but it remembers the past and is integrated in history, which means that it also looks to the future. It embraces all three tenses and does not separate time from so-called eternity: temporality.

What I do not believe, despite the fact that my approach here is from a Christian perspective, is that this Church is the exclusive monopoly of Christians.

**This Action Is Performed on the Basis of Our Beliefs,
Which Are Integrated in the Parameters of
Our Religion, Culture, and Individuality**

To avoid remaining in the abstract I express the following in concrete, personal terms.

Not long ago in Madrid, Leonardo Boff, explaining why he left the priesthood, said, "I think that at the current stage, under the current pontificate, priests have been reduced to bureaucrats of the sacred"⁶—this would be E. Drewermann's theory.

I would take this cultural matrix much further and say that they have been reduced to bureaucrats of the organization. My own ontological and psychological parameters, however, while they do not lessen my solidarity with Leonardo, are very different.

I was ordained a priest in the Roman Catholic rite, according to the Order of Melchizedek, who was neither a Jew, nor was circumcised, nor believed in Yahweh,⁷ and with reference to Abel, who is the symbol of the first, let us say, "ordinary" man. Although I do not deny my bond with Abraham, much less with Christ, I never thought I would receive an initiation for something that does not play a part in the mystical body of all reality. One enters through a certain door (in my case the Latin/Roman door) without the intention of remaining inside for life. What I mean to say is that the priesthood is not something that is "under anyone's pontificate"—without denying the sense of hierarchy that exists in all reality. The ancient Egyptian priests were also priests, as were the African religious mediators and the Hindu *purohita*, although later, in the reformed religions like Buddhism and Islam, the figure of the mediator tends to have been suppressed, as over the centuries it gradually took the form of an intermediary. The role of "mediator," which in

³ *De oratione* XV.1.

⁴ III.20.

⁵ Mt 6:33.

⁶ *Exodus* 19 (May/June 1993).

⁷ Gen 14:18–20.

Christianity, for example, is only assigned to the priesthood of Christ, is not exactly that of Aaron, nor that of Levi, but that of Melchizedek.⁸

What I have just discussed is an ecclesiological dilemma. That is, either the Christian Church dismantles all priesthood on the grounds that it is eliminated or incorporated by Christ, and therefore the other religions are reduced to being mere antechambers of Christianity, or else it recognizes the value of the priesthood as it has existed from the beginning, and the Christian priesthood reestablishes itself within this line defined by St. Peter.⁹ If the Epistle to the Hebrews, which was written to the Jews of Rome, depicts Christ as a priest (even though to the Jews he could not be a priest), could Christ not be a priest according to the Hindus, or according to Melchizedek—which is similar?¹⁰

I speak of similarity or, more precisely, of "homeomorphic equivalents," because I do not believe in the equality of all religions—but this is another subject altogether.

The monk, as such, is neither Christian nor Buddhist nor Hindu. Monasticism is a religious category that dates back to before religious differentiation. Something similar can be said of priesthood. There is a Christian interpretation of the priestly function, but priesthood is not necessarily Christian. If Christ did away with the priesthood, this means also the Christian priesthood. If there is a Christian priesthood, it is on the same plane of homeomorphic equivalence as all other priesthoods. Thus Christianity reacquires its role as a cosmic religion alongside the others—eliminating merits and demerits and not excluding, therefore, that there are religions and priesthoods that are, to varying degrees, spurious.

What I mean to say—and the Council of Trent simply echoes an age-old belief of mankind when it states that the priesthood is more than an office, more than a charisma, more than a technology of the numinous (in the pejorative sense of the word)—is that I would not accept the rules of the game that Boff seems to accept. This is a consequence of the idea that one has of the Church.

I would say that there is no Church, no sacred community (in the historico-religious sense of the word), that does not have its own priesthood, since every community, as such, is organic and therefore hierarchical (whatever negative connotations have been attached to this much-abused word). But no one, especially the last on the scene, has the monopoly of words. Or do we believe that modern man is at the height of human evolution and only he can represent humanity and be the bearer of all that is human? When social Darwinism (which in itself is fairly dehumanizing) becomes theological, it points us toward the most degenerate of theocracies.

There is, however, a second reaction that I would like to describe. While the first is historico-religious, the second is intercultural. And this second one is the fundamental interpellation of Asia to the Church of the third millennium. Either the message of Christ is universal or it is basically bound to the Abrahamic cultural tradition. Up until today this is how it has been, and up until today we have been unaware that this represented theological colonialism—like the political colonialism of so-called globalization. And here Boff, like most of the Christian theological world, belongs to the first world: he is dialectically opposed to injustice. This is his strength, but also his limitation. When, thirty years ago in a village in India, I attempted to solve a problem through confrontation and dialectics, the villagers told me I was right, but that they had lived for hundreds of years in that particular situation and that if they were to survive, though they were few, they could not challenge

⁸ Heb 5:10, etc.

⁹ 1 Pet 5:1ff.

¹⁰ Heb 5:1ff.

the power in the way that I was suggesting; they would have ended up losing—as the boy who is beaten by his master says to Don Quixote. If we rebel by placing reason before us, they will crush us with their weapons from behind. It is not so much a question of knowing who is right—we are right, we are always right, of course! It is a question of surviving and, if possible, living peacefully together.

There is another way to fight against power, other than setting another power against it, and this is by refusing to recognize it, by not letting ourselves be intimidated by money or machine guns or tiaras (a word, we should remember, that is actually of Persian origin).

This new game, this attitude, is neither a strategy nor another new weapon. Gandhi said that nonviolence is not a weapon but an ultimate religious attitude. If we think that the Church is only hierarchy, and that this hierarchy is merely that which "adds the frills," the attitude I describe will not be of much use.

Our idea of the Church, therefore, is key. If what we are after is to gain power so we can put at the top a well-disposed pope who will act according to our plan (evangelical, of course); if what we want is for priests to be able to marry, for women to become priests, for parishes to be more democratic, and for the Vatican to be simpler; if what we are demanding is merely the reform of the status quo, then the attitude I have described may be too Utopian. Let us then join the battle, let us organize another crusade—which will be better than the others because it will be nonviolent. We all know that without pressure and without revolution the dynamism of history would stagnate. All of this is certain, and I willingly join the movement. This is where we must begin. However, we must not allow ourselves to stop here. One thing must be done, without, however, forgetting the most important thing.¹¹ I do not believe it is simply a matter of electing a pope who belongs to the so-called third world. What must change is the very idea of papacy, priesthood, and the parish—ultimately, of the Church itself. If we only make reforms (though, I repeat, this is already a lot, and might be a step in the right direction) it means that we have not emerged from modernity, much less the West, and we are still holding onto the same concept of Church and the same idea about what Christianity can be.

We all know, moreover, that in the long run revolutions are simply revolutions, rotations around the same wheel, the changing of the guard. We have undoubtedly had emancipatory movements during the past six thousand years of history, but neither wars nor injustice nor cruelty have really diminished. We have abolished slavery as an institution, but I would not venture to say that slavery exists no more. And the fact that it is not legal makes it even worse. An Arab's honor used to be that his slaves were happy and well treated, and his image in the community depended on this. Today honor no longer counts, and we are only too aware of the plight of indigenous peoples almost everywhere, and even those who are not: the "wretched of the earth." Must I speak of the Brazilian *fazendas*, or the mines that mutilate children in various parts of the world, or the millions of child slaves in India? The change that must be made today is far more radical. And if the Church is something that has to do with the incarnation of the Divine in the world, it cannot escape this change.

This is the third phase in the conflict of ecclesiologies. And it is no longer, in fact, a question of either a Petrine, a Pauline, or a Johannine ecclesiology.

St. Francis, in his innocence, believed it was only the Church of San Damiano that he had to rebuild, but in actual fact it was the Universal Church. Luther's perspicacity showed him that it was a question of reforming the Church of Rome itself. Our situation is different. "Ask for the great things," quoted Origen long ago, "and the little things will be added unto

¹¹ Mt 23:23; Lk 2:42.

you."¹² It concerns neither the Church of San Damiano nor the Basilica of St. Peter, but the microcosm that is ourselves, aware that we reflect the macrocosm of all reality in general and mankind in particular. As Hugo of Saint Victor said, expressing a very traditional belief: *Domus Dei totus est mundus, domus Dei Ecclesia catholica est, domus Dei etiam est quaelibet fidelis anima*¹³—"God's house is the whole world; God's house is the Catholic Church; God's house is also every faithful soul"—because it is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

We have talked about cultural parameters, but we have left personal parameters somewhat in the background. A Church of a thousand million members or so may have a unifying myth and a single faith (and I say faith, not creed), but it is without human dimensions. The essence of the Church lies not in an idea but in its consolidation on a local scale. The Church is constituted by the incarnate Church, the local assembly presided over by Christ on an altar that represents the cosmos and the faithful gathered around it in the name of humanity. And when I use the term "local" I am giving to the space its corresponding value and not that of Newton, Kant, or Einstein. In the past, this space was the parish church that stood in the village square, with all that this square also included, from the town hall to the pharmacy to the boardinghouse.

We should not idealize these past times, however, as people were all as different as they are today. One single place does not mean a community—hence the confraternities, congregations, initiation societies, the distinct specialized and esoteric properties, and so on. We run the risk of confusing "Church" with ideology (an ideology of the Church, at best). One of the crises of the Church today is based on its very size—especially with the tendency to confuse creeds with faith.

In some parts of the world, grassroots communities have arisen by virtue of this breath of the Spirit. It is easier for these communities to crystallize in emergency situations than in a bourgeois society that is individualistic almost by definition.

The Christian initiation is undoubtedly baptism, but for sociological reasons, reinforced by a certain theology, its power has become blurred and almost depersonalized. Consequently, the mystery of the Incarnation itself seems to demand corporations that are more visible and tangible—more corporal, if I may be allowed the wordplay. The Roman genius has imposed that the bond be juridical rather than mystical and mythical, thereby creating schisms and heresies (in the primordial sense of the words). This is why the local Church is so enormously important. What use is "immediate jurisdiction" in a community of one thousand million? The pope needs intermediaries. Christ is not an intermediary, but the Mediator. Once again, the mystical dimension proves to be indispensable.

¹² *De oratione* II.2 and 14.

¹³ *De arca Noe morali* I.1 (PL 176.621A).

THE COUNCIL OF THE CHURCH

*Signa autem temporum
potestis diudicare?*

*Can you not discern
the signs of the times?*

Mt 16:3¹

The genitive in the title of this third chapter is intentionally ambivalent: it hints at my contribution to the ecclesial reflection, which has existed for some time now, regarding the expediency or necessity of a new Council (objective genitive). I would also point out, however, that an essential characteristic of the Church is that it is itself a Council: congregation, reconciliation, calling, assembly. A Church that is not conciliar is not a Church; it would be the same as saying that it is not a community.

A rigidly monotheistic interpretation of the Church leaves little room for the conciliar Church, unlike a Trinitarian of the Divinity. Perhaps this ecclesial change is reserved for the third Christian millennium—even though the conciliar nature of the Church has been its most traditional. I will limit myself, however, to saying a few words about the objective genitive—without losing sight of the subjective.

The World Situation

When two-thirds of the world live in a regime of injustice because of the works of Man, and this has long ceased to be justified from a religious point of view; when, since the Second World War onward, twenty-five hundred people have been dying daily due to acts of war, thirty-six hundred children starve to death every day, and millions of adults are unable to carry on a human existence; when the modern world boasts about having the means to remedy this situation and believes it is the most advanced in the history of mankind, to the extent of defining itself as the "first world" and the "developed world" in the face of those that it insults by calling the "developing world"; when the earth can already no longer bear the weight of the human race, which, in destroying itself, is also destroying the planet; when countries live in fear of each other, with an army of 30 million men and, even worse,

¹ In some manuscripts this is written as an affirmation rather than a question.

a growing number of women; when the *misereor super turbam* (compassion for the crowd)² of Christ cannot be more urgent than in these circumstances, the fact that those who claim to believe in the words of the Sermon on the Mount and the gospel of justice and peace continue to worry about mint, cumin, and anise³ is not only extremely sad but reveals an almost incomprehensible blindness.

The first two millennia of the Christian Church were dominated by the eschatological syndrome—initially with the expectation of the imminent coming of the Kingdom, and later with a projection toward a future life. When the injustices of society were endured for the sake of a reward in the next life, the Church was able to offer the comfort of the “supernatural” and “eternal” while preaching patience and long-suffering. But since this belief ceased to be operational (first of all because those who represented the official Church did not generally live in this “valley of tears,” this “bad inn” and this subhuman state and, second, because we came to realize that the nature of the kingdom⁴ does not separate justification in the [eschatological] beyond from human justice,) and left behind the fatalistic interpretation of *karma*, “God’s will” and “destiny,” Christ’s precept to seek the kingdom of God and his justice can neither leave us indifferent nor console us with an eschatological palliative—in linear time!

A Church in the third millennium can no longer play with the cards of the past: it cannot be merely a hospital for the wounded, an asylum for invalids (losers), a refuge for the oppressed, and a comfortable home for those who irresponsibly accept the *status quo*.

I am not defending a desacralized naturalism. On the contrary, I say that the sacred meaning of the secular must be discovered. The influence of spiritual figures of Eastern origin who are once more accentuating the mystical core of human life is sociological proof that Man does not, cannot, live by bread alone. What I am saying is that true mysticism is precisely that which is as close as possible to the earth. Every form of mysticism is, at the very least, pantheistic.

In short, when the problems of Man are a question of life or death, that is, of salvation or damnation, is it not for the Church, whatever form it takes, to concern itself with the human condition and do something for the kingdom of God and his righteousness?

This is an eminently ecclesial task. Consequently, it is not just the work of individuals who are, to varying degrees, charismatic or intelligent. When I say ecclesial I am not referring exclusively to the Roman Catholic Church, not even the Christian Churches, but to that invisible Church which is scattered throughout the earth. Nevertheless, there has to be one who convenes the others, even if then they must take a step back and leave the dynamics of the Council in the hands of the Spirit. The task concerns everyone. As Gregory the Great wrote, *In sancta Ecclesia unusquisque et portat alterum et portatur ab altero* (In the holy Church each one supports the other and is supported by the other).⁵

In this sense I would venture to make the following considerations.

A Permanent Universal Council

My friends would ask for a Vatican Council III to make the Church a little more moral, transparent, and tolerant. They would prefer a Chicago I Council, to inject a little more democratic, pragmatic, and realist spirit into the Roman Catholic Church. There are rumors of an African Council, and I imagine that other continents have other *desiderata*. I add my

² Mk 3:1.

³ Mt 23:23.

⁴ Mt 6:33.

⁵ In Ez 2.1.5 (PL 76.939) [Lubac catholicum 320]

voice to all of them and propose a more *catholic*, that is, universal, assembly, to which all the beings of the earth would be called, including both animals and plants. It should be first and foremost a Council of Reconciliation—as the word Council itself suggests. Glory to God in all human hearts and peace with the earth among those whom God so dearly loves⁶—this is what we should begin to sing in the next Christmas seasons.

I limit myself here, however, to covering a few more concrete points.

First of all, a Council to put an end to the cold (and at times not so cold) war between religions. I have been advocating ecumenical ecumenism for over a quarter of a century. Enough writing about it!

I shall just mention one corollary. We will not solve our domestic problems today if we artificially limit ourselves to them. *Sarvam sarvatmakan* (all is in relation to all), says the Shivaite tradition, and many others. We cannot tackle the problem of the ordination of women without taking into consideration a change in the idea of the priesthood and the evolution of female sensitivity throughout the world. This is why we must listen to these voices and invite them to speak—and not just speak about them. "Speak for those who cannot speak for themselves," the Bible tells us.⁷

The problem of priestly celibacy cannot be solved, or even raised, without taking into account the human experience of our time with regard to sexuality, the lessons of other religions and other relative issues, such as human rights, the freedom of the individual, and so on. We cannot just talk to each other behind closed doors. We must go out into the town squares and the streets of the world, into the highways and the byways and invite anyone who wants to come, whether lame, maimed, blind, and especially poor, to the banquet of Life.⁸ In a time of emergency it matters little who sounds the drum to call the meeting. The echoes come from all four corners of the world and it is not important to know from where they originate.

The problem of peace among peoples is not just a political problem. The issue of technology is not merely a question of technology or of Western culture. All the great problems of humanity, such as happiness, justice, hunger, trade, economy, and so on, are essentially religious problems. If the Church is reluctant to talk about all this, it is guilty of a sin against humanity and is as yet unqualified to use such high-sounding phrases as *sacramentum mundi*, *signum levatum in nationes*, *mysterion kosmikon tes ekklesias*, *Ekklesia proeliou kai selenes*, and so on. It would therefore be no more than a small club that follows the inertia of history and betrays the intuition of its best members in these past twenty centuries.

Here an important clarification must be made. I have no authority to say, much less to propose, what the Church should be. Earlier I criticized theological colonialism; there are, however, two ways to overcome it: be reduced to being a "little flock,"⁹ and aspire to be the "salt of the earth" and "light of the world"—with the awareness that light is invisible and that salt only has the functional value of making food tastier.

In the First Council of Jerusalem the crucial question was raised of the identity of Christianity, that is, whether it should be a kind of reformed Judaism or have the boldness to become independent, doing away with the primordial sacrament of circumcision that symbolizes the Alliance of Yahweh with his people.¹⁰ Similarly, the Christian section of this

⁶ Lk 2:14.

⁷ Prov 31:8.

⁸ See Lk 14:21ff.

⁹ Lk 12:32.

¹⁰ Mt 5:13–14.

new Council should seriously confront the question of baptism, which has basically become a substitution for circumcision. This was eliminated, yet there is little talk of the circumcision of the mind, which today is still necessary for understanding most of the current theology. The Church still belongs to the Abrahamic cultural tradition. The problems are immense—yet not wanting to face them because they are difficult is no excuse at all. It is one thing to further the Church in awareness and respect, but quite another to simply allow oneself to be dragged along. There is, however, a historical inertia. Christianity's boldness in becoming independent from the Synagogue did not last long, and it set itself up as a reformed Judaism that was meant to be more perfect. I very much suspect that the scourge of anti-Semitism would not have prospered if the Christian centuries had maintained the audacity that the First Council showed in breaking the covenant with Yahweh. After two thousand years, perhaps the time has come to sever the umbilical cord with Judaism and consider it a separate and fully independent religion like any other.

The Church's "neighbors" are the other religions. This is the inevitable problem of pluralism. Without this, tolerance is reduced to merely a lesser evil, which is practiced when the subject tolerated has no power and suspended when it becomes too serious a threat to us. It is then eliminated so it no longer has to be tolerated. By pluralism I do not mean a reluctant acceptance of the existence of other religions or the assertion that all religions are equal, but the recognition that, being different, no human instance is justified in eliminating them. Pluralism is valid not only in relation to the religions of the world but also with the Churches and within the same Church. I repeat, pluralism demands moral courage and intellectual humility; it implies the recognition of our contingency.

As I write these lines we are reliving moments of historical transcendence. It appears we are unable to learn the lessons of history and that myths are more resistant than ideas. I am referring to the crusade preached by the United States against terrorism and the Inquisition established by NATO for the purpose of eliminating an ideological attitude by military force. Will it take another nine centuries for us to regret this? These are religious problems that affect all mankind but that mankind does not yet have an appropriate place to tackle. The United Nations would like to be such a place, but it is not because it has eliminated the religious factor from the political factor, for the sake of the unity of the ideology that was dominant in the period it was founded. This is not a digression, but an example.

Let us now go back to what is intraecclesial. A corollary of pluralism is the question of subsidiarity. Rational subsidiarity is only possible if trust is mutual. Only when we recognize a higher instance that has authority in cases of conflict do we no longer need to gather around a center in order to feel powerful or confident. I must add that the justification for this subsidiarity is not the efficiency of the individual when he or she is moved by a selfish interest, such as neoliberal "privatization"; it is not bureaucratic pragmatism but is essentially different: it springs from the nature of a mystical intuition that sees the center of reality in all its parts—like the well-known medieval description of God: "an infinite sphere whose center is nowhere and whose circumference is everywhere."¹¹ This is the foundation of the "local Church."

Maybe if we were more concerned with these central issues, the other concrete problems would either implode or we would find the proper perspective to face them with equanimity. It is useless to say that the Church must be de-Westernized if we do not even understand these issues.

For many years I have dared to propose a Jerusalem Council II in order to express that this is not a minor question but a problem of critical identity. Today I am inclined to

¹¹ *The Book of the 24 Philosophers.*

withdraw the name for three reasons: the first because of the political events in the Holy City, the second because it would be difficult for such a Council to avoid being labeled as a strictly Christian Council, and the third because if it is an ecumenical Council it should not be hinged on a Judeo-Christian-Islamic symbol such as is the city of Jerusalem. For now, however, the name and the place are secondary. The important thing is the ecumenical ecumenicality of the Council.

At the same time, the initiative has to come from somewhere, though as I have said, whoever convenes the meeting should involve as many of those convened as possible and the program should be worked out together.

There is, however, another reason for not suggesting a name or a place for the Council. This Council must be permanent and be held at different levels, in every place around the world and under the most diverse auspices.

And this brings us back to our starting point and the subjective genitive: the Church as a Council. The third Christian millennium comes laden with new tasks. We might say that it involves a more profound catholicity.

An initial objection to what has been said regards the utopian character. I do not wish to defend myself by saying that today's utopias are yesterday's realities. I prefer to emphasize a transhistorical factor that is contained in history, known as Providence, Coincidence, Devil, Karma, or Fate.

I am referring to the fact that the self-understanding of the Church is not so much that it is a "perfect society" (which it is not) as that it embodies the reality of the Spirit—as a unanimous tradition attests. Perhaps the expression *mysterium mundi* says it better than the Latin translation used by the Second Vatican Council: *Sacramentum mundi*. I am not referring to a special "assistance" of the Holy Spirit—which history does not attest. I am referring to the fact that we cannot pursue the history of mankind with merely dialectical or rational criteria. If in reflecting on the Church, as on history in general, we eliminate a priori this fact of the Spirit we are committing a methodological error. It is written that faith moves mountains.

Second, it could be argued that although what has been said is very important, there are more urgent problems that cannot be postponed. I could not agree more, but these are not our responsibility at this time. I limit myself here to making a few preliminary considerations.

Some Preparatory Steps

For any utopia to meet its *topos* it must be able to see it as possible in the field of ideas. Although sometimes it arrives generations late, contemplation is always a forerunner to action. Activists are in the habit of dancing to the sound of music that has been heard, suffered, and created by contemplatives—when contemplation is genuine and not mere "theory" in the modern sense. Let me cover just a few points.

1. First, I want to emphasize the need for greater self-confidence, reinforced by fraternal communion and the conviction that we are also the Church. Vatican II was merely a timid (i.e., prudent, because it is realistic) starting point.

Although I do not disagree with the criticisms against theologians of the likes of Balthasar, Congar, Lubac, Chenu, Scheeben, Adam, Newman, Rademacher, and so on, my own conception of Church has been brilliantly reformulated by Bishop Casaldáliga. I have upheld and continue to uphold, together with the Christian tradition, the validity of the famous phrase *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (outside the Church there is no salvation). I would also say that a large part of Patristics meant this in its cosmic and mystic sense. In my opinion, moreover,

this phrase expresses marvelously what the Church is: the place of salvation. And it is so true that where one encounters salvation, there is the Church. As Bishop Casaldáliga says, "Whereas I once held that outside the Church there is no salvation, I now believe that outside salvation there is no Church."¹² That this Church is identified with the Roman Catholic Church nor even the latter itself sustains. And the fact that salvation is a mystery is denied by no one.

Yet we can have no trust in the Church if we do not trust ourselves as its members. St. Paul himself demanded that adults have adult faith.

2. I believe we must put more effort into building the new Church than combating the old. And the field is enormous. We mentioned earlier that the Spirit makes everything new. This is why it is called life-giving, because Life is constantly new. Likewise, we could add that new wine must be put into new wineskins¹³—without this appearing as contempt for the past.

3. We must not think we are in possession of the truth—and this means overcoming the temptation of wanting to be infallible. If the Church is, as tradition claims, the bride of Christ, it must be the place of *coincidentia oppositorum* and the place of reconciliation. The truth, as Thomas Aquinas wrote, cannot be possessed; if anything, we are possessed by it. Those who believe themselves to be the owners (euphemistically we might say "in charge") of truth easily become intolerant.

4. We must regain the mystical sense of existence. It goes without saying that by mysticism I am referring not to psychological phenomena of a paranormal nature, but to the complete experience of reality.

The Church of tomorrow will be more *Christiania*, as elsewhere I have described it, than Christianity. *Christiania* goes beyond Christianity in the same way that Christianity has superseded Christendom. The three phases must coexist, but the proportion should be reversed: the mystical and experiential aspect must take first place (*Christiania*), followed by the doctrinal aspect with the pluralism of truth (Christianity), and the legal and political aspect as an appendix (Christendom).

5. We must not lose the historical perspective.

From this point of view, the official Church is much healthier than it was a few centuries ago. The struggle between the priesthood and the empire has lost its virulence, although it continues to this day curiously interiorized. Canossa no longer exists, nor do Pope Gregory VII or Emperor Henry IV. Today the papacy represents the empire while a large part of the militant and popular Church represents the priesthood. The episcopate engages in politics (with the best intention in the world) and the Christian communities celebrate the liturgy.

Furthermore, a historical view teaches us that "beans are cooked everywhere"—in other words, not only have there been conflicts and even more painful events in other periods, but freedom of action and expression has existed from the beginning. Did the Fathers of the Desert not speak out against the bishops? Did St. Francis not speak out, or St. Bernard or St. Catherine of Siena write against the pope? First of all, though may be argued that they were not taken very seriously, this is not true: the Avignon papacy came to an end, for example. And second, their words live on and continue to resound in the hearts of many. Neither the Church nor history is finished.

6. The historical perspective must go hand in hand with the knowledge of the theological tradition—which cannot be reduced to the level of handbooks (precious though they may be).

¹² P. Casaldáliga, *In Pursuit of the Kingdom* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 109.

¹³ Mt 9:15–17.

We have lived through times of microdoxy on the one hand and superficiality on the other. The two-thousand-year-long tradition of the Church is not only rich in mystical depth, but also in ecclesiological lessons and Christian identities. Being a Christian does not mean being a member of a political party or a "fan" of the latest pope (admirable though this may be). However, if we are to avoid falling into a temporality that is barely less than heretic, we cannot assume that the time factor is an absolute theological place. Statements not only evolve, they also change.

7. Allow me to comment here: In many discussions involving the hierarchy, especially among theologians, I have noticed that there is not only indignation (quite understandable) but also anger or fear that causes us to lose not only a certain equanimity but also a much-needed sense of humor or ability to relativize our little personal "tragedies." It sometimes seems that on both sides there is an unwillingness or inability to understand the language of the other. An example of this could be Drewermann's pathetic discussion with his bishop. I am not saying that everything can be solved with just a sincere smile and a little irony or sense of humor, but it would certainly help to lessen the bitterness. Theology is also an art—and humor is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

I am suggesting that theology and history can teach us to follow our consciences with greater flexibility and confidence; that is, not merely to resist or say no, but also to assume our ecclesial responsibilities without compromising, becoming discouraged, and giving up. Have I not preached repeatedly that life's obstacles are something that, if we learn to overcome them gracefully, can become a means for our human and Christian growth? It is written that all who claim to live religiously in Christ will suffer persecution¹⁴—and the quotation has its roots in the Old Testament.¹⁵

8. A more serious issue, to which I have already indirectly alluded, is the monoculture of the Christian Church, although nowadays they speak of inculcation—which in any case should be intercultururation (two-way). The Church of the last two millennia belongs, as we have said, to the Abrahamic cultural tradition, which is an extraordinary culture, but not unique. There is no such thing as "cultural universals" but only "human invariants." We refer to culture as the encompassing myth that causes us to see reality in one way rather than another, the cosmic vision underlying every statement that originates from a culturally determined way of thinking.

To avoid being overly verbose I give just a couple of examples here. The Semitic genius is markedly sensitive to differences, while a large part of Eastern thought is more sensitive to identities. The ultimate reality is basically transcendent to the former and immanent to the latter.

The Roman genius has ontologized the law; the Indian genius has psychologized it. Thus, being an adopted child is actually more important than being a biological child: the former is the heir. The law, the Torah, the Shariah, belong to Redemption. Hindu laws do not (*śruti*); they are simply precepts to be remembered (*smṛiti*).

In other words, is it not still an extension of the colonialist syndrome to consider the possibility of an ecumenical Council embodied in paradigms of a single culture? Hence the capital importance of interculturality.

9. Regarding the agenda of the Council, I should point out that not only can an agenda not be set, but it must remain constantly open. We are so used to monarchical (and I would

¹⁴ 2 Tim 3:12.

¹⁵ Eccles 2:1 and all of the Book of Job.

also say monotheistic) structures that when we mention the Council we instinctively think of a more or less solemn and well-attended meeting. As I have said, we are talking about a permanent Council that represents a practical updated version of the Communion of Saints. It is not about decentralization, which is something negative, but concentration, which is not the same as centralism. As I said earlier, the center of the human community is the local Church.

10. After all we have said, it is obvious that we cannot suggest the agenda of a Council, which cannot be the same in every climate. To express a new opinion, however, I believe we ought to overcome every form of monistic "centrism," not only ethnocentrism and its more subtle reform, which is patriarchy, but also historic-centrism and logocentrism, and also anthropocentrism and technocentrism. The Trinity (which is not monotheism) would offer us a model here.

11. I began by saying that the configuration of the Church is in our hands, and I conclude here by emphasizing not only that our hands must be clean and constantly open, but that they must also be the hands of a Body whose soul is the Spirit—hands that obey the inspiration of the porter in shaping the kingdom. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand."¹⁶

In other words, the Council I would wish for is not a Society of Sovereign States (a contradiction in terms), but an Assembly of peoples, cultures, and religions that do not proclaim themselves as sovereign (supreme) but recognize that they are bound to each other and open to the breath of the Spirit—although interpretations may differ.

* * *

These reflections were written when few dared to think about a Council, both because of a sober pessimistic realism, and because of a certain disenchantment on the part of the devotees of Vatican II. Everything was seen as a utopia. With the passing of the years and the deterioration of the state of the world, as a sign of hope voices are once again being heard from the most far-flung corners of the world—voices that demand the participation of the religious spirit in the great problems that afflict humanity. Without the religious factor, the victory of the strongest prevails, with the consequent reaction of the vanquished. The road is long and the horizon is unclear, but the direction leaves no room for doubt. This is the great opportunity, the *Kairos* of the present time.

¹⁶ Jer 18:6, see Sir 33:13.

Part 4

ECOSOPHY, THE WISDOM OF THE EARTH

ECOSOPHY, OR THE COSMOTHEANDRIC HANDLING OF NATURE*

By the word "ecosophy" I do not mean an improved or refined ecology. The Industrial Revolution definitely had an idea (*logos*) about the world, the human residence (*oikos*), and wanted to make best use of the Earth, namely, to serve Man, "the king of creation and lord of the earth." By and large, modern ecology has not given up on this idea. It has only modified it, adjusting to the bitter discovery that, if we want to make further use of the Earth, we have to treat it better, more nicely, so that it can yield its fruits longer. We should therefore return to recycling where necessary. The basic attitude, however, remains the same.

"Ecosophy," by contrast, is a new word for an old wisdom. It expresses that very traditional consciousness that the Earth is a living being, both in its parts and as a whole. The question to ask is not only if we, for example, should sacrifice animals because they are "useful" for human life. What is to be debated is our entire access to matter and the physical-sensuous world, whose names (*physis, natura, bhūmi*) in their etymology already reveal that our world is something that procreates and is alive. "Ecosophy" means the "wisdom of the earth." The Earth is not a mere provider of raw materials for humankind; it is more than humankind's stage or habitation. It is Man's outer body and living space, Man's home. Even more: it is one constitutive element of the entire (cosmotheandric) reality, another element being Man and the other element being the Divine.

"Ecosophy" stands for the wisdom of listening to the Earth and acting accordingly. Hasn't *homo technologicus* lost contact with the rhythms of Nature? Hasn't technocracy imposed its order on body, mind, and society, an artificial order at best having nothing to do with the order of natural rhythms: with the *rta, dharma, taxis, ordo* of old traditions? We should rediscover the rhythms of life, and ultimately of Being.

I try here to formulate and develop nine theses from an intercultural perspective. Culture is the comprehensive mythos¹ that offers us the horizon within which, and from which, we experience reality. Each culture, however, is particular. Any discourse about the Earth (i.e., Nature) must therefore be intercultural.

* Original text: "Ökosophie oder der kosmotheandrische Umgang mit der Natur," a summary of the lecture Panikkar gave on June 2, 1993, within the cycle *Natur neu denken* [Rethinking nature in a new way] organized by P. V. Dias and H. Kessler at Goethe University, Frankfurt, 1996.

¹ Ed. note: As usual, Panikkar uses the word *mythos* here in the broad, transcendental sense of experiential horizon, paradigm.

Our crisis consists in the fact that today's ground-holding cultural positions can neither ground nor hold anything.

They provide no grounding for human life, nor do they hold humanity together. This is not in any sense merely a crisis of philosophical principles or of reason. Rather, the crisis consists in the fact that the three traditional "positions" that human beings have stood upon for at least six thousand years no longer hold the world or humanity together. What are these three positions? Until recently, all cultures have lived in a threefold world:

- a. In the world of Gods: one had to know how to deal with them, whether they are dangerous or not; one had to worship or avoid them (sacrifice, obedience, worship).
- b. In the world of Man: dealing with human beings, especially the powerful, was always an art; a large part of human education consisted in learning how to deal with human beings (grammar, rhetoric, logic, and so on).
- c. In the world of Nature: to live in it, be acquainted with it, and make use of it (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music, and so on).

These three worlds are hardly still worlds. At most, they are parts of systems. That is why the ground-holding positions have broken into crisis. We have now laid the groundwork of a fourth world, one that neither holds us nor grounds us, an ever more artificial world. We live in a fourth world of mega-machines that we ourselves have made. And we have now perhaps begun to notice that this, our own creature, has made itself independent of us and is forcing its rules upon us. This is a pressure greater than that of the Gods, the king, and even Nature.

I would like to emphasize the following: the ecological crisis presents a revelation. If one does not see it as revelation, one does not see it deeply and seriously enough. It is admittedly no theophany: what is revealed is no new god. Also no anthropophany like that of the Enlightenment, which gave us a new image of Man. Rather, it is a cosmophany: the previously silent cosmos now cries out and speaks. Our responsibility is to hear this scream, understand the language, and perceive this cosmophany. It is today's revelation, and the revelation is one of contingency. This does not concern the issue of making a religion out of ecology. It is about religion becoming ecological. The distinction is important.

Only a transformation can save us.

A small modification in today's parameters will not get us out of this dead end—no mere reform, which would only prolong the agony of a system condemned to death. Also no revolution; the deformation and violence would only bring forth a contrary reaction. Rather, a metamorphosis, a transformation. This means experiencing the self and Nature in a transformed way, not simply interpreting Nature in a new way. The problem is not ecological, economic, or political. The problem includes these, but our crisis is far deeper than can be coped with through new technology alone or by employing new measures—however important these may be.

In the end, this crisis concerns an issue of life or death for humankind. And that makes it religious, metaphysical. In order to recognize this, however, we need tranquility (i.e., serenity), empathy (i.e., commitment), distance (i.e., interculturality), "contempl-action" (i.e., synthesis of practice and theory). Only a metamorphosis can save us.

Such a transformation is the cosmotheandric experience.

This indicates that Reality is trinitarian. First, godly: I use the word "godly" as synonym for "free," "endless," or "mystery," thus not susceptible to manipulation and not permeable to the intellect. Another is human: I consider intelligence comprehensively, in its entire breadth and wisdom, as the characteristic of Man. And finally, cosmic, that is, material.

Reality is neither only godly nor only human nor only material. It is therefore neither theocentric nor anthropocentric, nor cosmocentric. That is why neither monotheism nor humanism nor materialism is a satisfying answer to our current crisis. We have accrued sufficient experience over the last six thousand years in all these possible dimensions of reality. A new, comprehensive perspective on reality is needed, one that does not neglect to consider any of its particular dimensions. What is required is new, diverse one-ness comprising both an undivided unity and the differentiated diversity of every being. Through a cosmotheandric intuition, reality lets itself be read as a text in which the three dimensions of cosmic, godly, and human are interwoven. This intuition unifies all forces of the universe, from the electromagnetic, through the human-personal, to the godly. The cosmotheandric vision calls for an inner discovery of a lifestyle oriented not primarily or exclusively on the future but open to the mystical experience that lives completely in the present.²

Real Nature is no object.

Nature is no object for human beings. The object of thought, when thought focuses upon Nature, can only be an abstraction, a construct, not real Nature. Subject-object thinking is surely necessary and justified in itself, but such a way of thinking is not—in principle—methodically proper for acquaintance with Nature. If science means objective science, there can be no natural science but only a science of the behavior of observable processes. But there can certainly be authentic acquaintance with Nature.

Our dominant way of thinking today is affected by natural science. What probably accounts for the genius, the greatness of Western civilization since the time of Greeks, is classification. If you take any natural science or sociology book in hand, you will find only divisions and arrangements: without classification, there remains only chaos. But two things cannot, on principle, fit into a classification system. First, the very criterion for the classification. But a criterion is pragmatic and risky. Tibet and Switzerland would fall into the same category if the criterion were simply mountains, but not if it were money.

Neither can the second fit into a classification system—and this is my main concern: the classifier. I, a human being, the classifier, cannot fit into the classification. And if Man is nevertheless put into a classification system, then his humanity and dignity, what he actually is, will be lost. If I let myself be imprisoned within a classification system, where then are my dignity, my self-consciousness, my freedom yet to be found? Each of us is unclassifiable! Every bit of us can be classified: DNA and blood and everything, with the exception of this core, what I myself am. The real Man vanishes in a classification system. An object of thought is only an abstraction, an object of will only a projection.

Do ecologists want to tame Nature through thinking, much as technocrats seek to exploit it? This is an attitude that I polemically call hunter-epistemology: you have to be a subject and make everything else an object. You have to conduct a perfectly accurate investigation before

² See R. Panikkar, *Der Dreiklang der Wirklichkeit: Die kosmotheandrische Offenbarung (The Triad of Reality: The Cosmotheandric Revelation)* (Salzburg/Munich, 1995).

heading off to hunt for a particular target. And when you have found it, you can cock the hammer, fire your gun, and hit the bull's-eye. From that, you can then draw conclusions—and afterward complain that all of us are violent.

In general, we are raised to utilize our reason as a weapon: to be right, to persuade others, to have power over them. Perhaps the use of reason as a weapon stands behind everything else that harms and afflicts us. The true nature of reason does not consist in being the victor. It is important to focus one's attention on the corrosive power of abstract thinking. If you think about something, really think it through and through, it disappears. A subject-object way of thinking is unreliable for the question of how to deal with Nature.

**The categories of natural science
are all inadequate for dealing with Nature.**

They are useful for many things—I am by no means against the natural sciences. They have their place. But not here, for the categories of natural science are inadequate for an acquaintance with Nature. Acquaintance means more than knowledge concerning the various behaviors of observable processes.

Modern natural science must necessarily presuppose Nature as objective and measurable. And ultimately, it presupposes a mechanical picture of the world. It is monocultural and can universalize itself only if it drives out all other cultures. Perhaps this is the fate of the planet. But this natural science is neither generally accepted nor universal. It belongs essentially to a particular culture, which no doubt contains a certain truth. If we tolerate other cultures only for romantic reasons, then it is high time that we made a museum for them and allowed them to disappear. Culture is not folklore. Every culture has its distinct uniqueness and is a totality in which politics, religion, and economics have their place.

Natural science can only predict Nature's behavior because it has measured this behavior and derived Nature's patterns of behavior in that way. To illuminate the difference from other cultures, let us cite three basic metaphors—without yet going deeper into their validity—that have been imagined as basic metaphors of reality in various cultures.

1. In the beginning was the "Big Bang," an explosion of energy; this makes sense only with a mechanistic picture of the world.
2. In the beginning was the cosmic egg (*hiranyagarbha*, Anaximander, and others); this is plausible only with an image of the world as living, where the universe is alive (cf. the *anima mundi* theory).
3. In the beginning was the Word (the Vedas say this eight centuries before John's Gospel); this is only plausible within a universe that is intelligent and alive; otherwise, it makes no sense.

Each of these three basic metaphors is plausible only within its own distinct worldview. If Nature is more than an enormous machine, then natural science is not competent for an acquaintance with a Nature of this sort.

**To be acquainted with Nature means to grow aware
of our cosmotheandric belonging together.**

Genuine acquaintance requires transformation into what is acquainted. True acquaintance is impossible without love. Human nature is culture, and acquaintance is the human way to be nature, that is, to realize ourselves. It is about being nature, not controlling nature, but more to transform ourselves into it: "*connaissance = naltre ensemble*" (acquaintance, "connaître" as "being born together").

In today's *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* an advertisement says, "We don't need to love nuclear energy." This is the problem! We are expected to have to live with something that we do not love. That is our current fate: to have to live with many things that we do not need to love. Fire is dangerous, but we love it. It is worthy of love.

It is not about viewing Nature romantically. Certainly not. It is also not about viewing ourselves as merely natural in some undifferentiated manner, for human nature is culture, and that means cultivation. Cultivation means caring, making more beautiful, bringing to perfection, not through mastery and control but through the shaping of God's creation with care, and keeping it while shaping it. This means different attitudes.

**The Art (*τέχνη*, *technē*) of dealing with
Nature is called Ecosophy.**

Not our know-how about the Earth or matter, but ecosophy in the sense of the subjective genitive (*genitivus subjectivus*): the wisdom of the Earth itself, that is, the Earth's wisdom, that we have to recognize and grow acquainted with. This is symbiosis with Nature, whereby all of us each take on our own roles.

But we live in a state of war with Nature, against Nature, and we believed ourselves the victor: "maîtres et possesseurs de la nature" (masters and possessors of nature—Descartes), "sezionare la natura" (*dissecare naturam*, dissecting nature—Galileo). In the meantime, we are beginning to realize that we are the defeated. A few years ago, a symposium took place in Assisi under the motto "La Terra non può aspettare" (The Earth cannot wait). My contribution was titled "La Terra può; gli uomini non possono" (The Earth can; humanity cannot).³ Ecology in the usual sense is only an armistice: to treat Nature a little better so that it serves and benefits us a little longer still. But that is insufficient.

To recognize the wisdom of Nature is a natural human work. Humanity is what should be the wisdom of Nature. Thus, no romantic world picture. We are—if we are what we really are—the wise ones of Nature if we do not try to violate and objectify it. We are from Nature, in Nature, with Nature, and also over Nature because we are not just Nature. We are the wise ones of Nature, able to know how everything in Nature is and able to establish a symbiosis with it to make life possible for us all.

Nature is our third body.

My first body is the body that I see. The second body is humanity (*Corpus Christi*, *dharmakāya*, *buddhakāya*, the body of humanity). This is a powerful intuition of nearly all peoples, that humanity is a family and constitutes a body, and the body is alive. Our third body is the Earth, Nature. We are the Earth, and do not just live on it for our use or enjoyment.

We have to treat Nature like our first body: neither rule over it nor be ruled by it: Friendliness, mutual trust, balance. Therefore, a text from the *Upaniṣads* (*BU III.3.7*) says, "He who lives on the earth, distinct from the earth, which the earth does not know, whose body is the earth, who moves the earth from inside, that is your *ātman*, the inner actuator [driver], the immortal one." This insight is three-and-a-half-thousand years old. I could quote many more other traditions of this sort. They aim at a transformation. We are the earth [*prthivi*], it is our body, and we are yet more: its soul.

³ See R. Panikkar, "Ecosofia: la nuova saggezza. Per una spiritualità della terra" [Ecosophy: The new wisdom—Toward a spirituality of the earth] (Assisi, 1993).

**Though painful at first, "emancipation"
from technocracy is the liberating task of our time.**

The task is political and spiritual: liberation from technocentrism so that we become truly free. The cosmotheandric perspective offers this new basic attitude for a life of peace in and with this world. Toward that aim, some points of approach:

1. The liberation of Man from the straitjacket of technocracy takes place through *τέχνη*, art, not through the machine. By and large, our means of liberation today are machines. But the liberation of humanity comes through humanity, not through the machine. I want to emphasize explicitly: I am not against tools (technology of the first order). They are, so to speak, an extension of the human being. Where, in this sense, are our current-day engineers, those who invent techniques that are an extension of Man and the Human, not a displacement?

2. The distinction between craft (activity) and job, between labor and work, is important. Work means: renting out our power and talents for something that does not directly concern us and for which we get money, that is, something for which one receives every other thing. In a society that wishes to develop creative human power in this way, no wonder thirty million soldiers are needed. A human being needs to make things, produce, be active, but this has to be a creative activity, not some service for a megamachine.

3. Again concerning the primacy of art, in the sense of Aristotelian *poiēsis*, which is not just *praxis*: we should make what gives us joy, satisfaction, and fulfillment. A little story: on the Zócalo, the central temple plaza of Federal District of Mexico (i.e., Mexico City). Twenty years ago. No American this time, but a Spaniard. He spots a man who makes and paints chairs in the Mexican style. Since he wants to furnish his house, he asks, "What does such a chair cost?" "Ten pesos," is the answer. "I want six chairs, six exactly like this one. I will give you fifty pesos." "No," says the man. "Seventy-five pesos!" — "What an uneducated man! You have never even held fifty pesos in your hand and no idea how much it is. I will pay you fifty pesos for the six chairs, not seventy-five." "No," says the man, "seventy-five pesos, or no deal." "Then, I will pay you sixty or nothing." "No," he responds, "seventy-five pesos." "Well, can you at least tell me how you come up with seventy-five, when six times ten is only sixty?" "How? Extra cost for the boredom of making every chair the same!" We humans already behave like machines. Our human essence is already mechanized. To say six times ten is sixty holds good for machines, but not for us humans.

Ecosophy, the wisdom of the Earth! And free room for provisional, alternative perspectives on this wisdom! This presupposes trust. There is no alternative but the possibility of free room for provisional and varied alternatives. The wisdoms of Prussians and Bavarians, Africans, and whoever: room for decentralized alternatives.

In a word: *metanoia*. But *metanoia* means three things, two of which have been emphasized enough. The first is repentance and regret; the second is conversion, thus a transformation of mentality. But for the third, *metanoia* means not only a change in thinking; it means also the spiritual and intellectual discovery that we are not thinking machines nor even just thinking creatures, but more, not less! This kind of rethinking means to think of ourselves and Nature together. We share the same destiny.

ECOSOPHY

*An Intercultural Reflection**

*"Truth, Order, Consecration,
Ardor, Word, Sacrifice
uphold the Earth;
may she, the ruling Mistress
of what has been and what will come,
spread for us a vast domain."*

Bhumi-sūkta AV XII.1.1

The Earth, *bhumi*, the ground and support of all that has come to be, is maintained and supported by six pillars. The Earth is nurtured and sustained by Truth (*satya*), Order (*rta*), Consecration (*dikṣā*), Ardor (*tapas*), Word (*brahman*), and Sacrifice (*yajña*). The Earth is not inert matter, not just a planet or a mere body. The Earth is Mother *Nature*, "she" is that which has come to be (Greek *γιγνομαι*, Latin *fieri*), "she" is the fruit of those six principles, according to the *vedic* vision of reality.

Our predominant technocratic culture has not only changed our ways of living, but also our ways of thinking, and thus of experiencing reality: a necessity just for survival. If our *praxis* did not agree with our ways of thinking, we would be victims of a cultural schizophrenia, which is a great danger of our modern times.

The hymn of the *Atharva-veda* should not be interpreted as a mere poetic metaphor or, worse, as a fruit of a "primitive" thinking. Rather, the hymn voices another cosmology, another cosmos. *Truth* is not only an epistemic device, and *Order* not just a juridical regulation. *Consecration* or *initiation* is the human link connecting us with the Earth, and *Ardor* is that energy that constitutes Man as different from the rest of the animals. *Word* is not an instrumental term, and *Sacrifice* not a superstitious ritual.

The above-quoted text is not an isolated case. The *skambha* hymns of the same *Atharva-veda*, the *Puruṣasūkta* of the *Rg-veda*, and many other texts of other traditions as well reveal a different idea of what we still call our *oikos* (ecology, i.e., *oiko-logy*), our Earth, our human habitat. I cannot get rid of the suspicion that our discovery of the spatial magnitude of the universe has dazzled us up to the extent of distracting us from its (other) greatness. The

* Unpublished original text: *Ecosophy: An Intercultural Reflection*.

human habitat is richer and greater than a purely material space, or rather, space is more than just distance.

It is obviously not a question of grafting those *vedic* intuitions on the canvas of the current scientific cosmology. The challenge is more radical. Our world situation does not allow us to be so monoculturally provincial any longer. Nor is it a question of accepting uncritically the old and obsolete pictures of the world.¹ Precisely because we cannot ignore the scientific revolutions, the challenge of humanity today demands a radical transformation—as I have suggested time and again. This state of affairs has triggered a timid reaction that has spread all over the earth under the name of *ecology*. And yet, I submit, ecology still operates under the acceptance of the dominant cosmology.

I am not saying that all *ecological* movements are superficial, but we need a giant's stride. The word *ecosophy* both pays a tribute to the ecological awareness now spreading all over the earth, and enlarges its meaning from a more intercultural perspective. We need to discover the intrinsic value of this *loka*, *bhumi*, Earth, this planet, and our human life, without alienating ourselves from our environment. A mutation is needed. What I aim at is letting us experience the Earth as that primordial ground on which we not only stay, but also *are*—without excluding a divine dimension also. In other words, the world is also a religious category—if we do not make a sect out of religion. I touch on this complex problem under only one perspective, although I bring out some of its implications.

By the word *ecosophy* (already used by Arne Naess, but with a different meaning) I do not mean a qualified or a more refined ecology. The Industrial Revolution also had an idea of the world, the limited human habitat, and wanted to utilize the Earth for the best, namely to serve Man, "the king of creation and Lord of the Earth." By and large, modern ecology has not given up this idea. It has only qualified the notion after the bitter discovery that, if we want to go on exploiting the Earth, we have to treat "her" in a better and kinder way, so that "she" may yield her fruits for a longer period. We will resort to recycling if need be, but the basic attitude remains the same: eco-logy as the rational exploitation of the Earth as a resource. We are still within the Judeo-Christian scientific myth.

It is revealing that a very serious ecological society founded in 1982 was officially called the MacArthur Foundation for World Resources, as if the nature of the Earth only consisted in resources for Man. In 1984 the wonderful and useful book *Gaia* appeared, with the telling subtitle: *An Atlas of Planet Management*—still obsessed with the Baconian concern that we have to manage, that is, to control the otherwise wild and inanimate planet. Words have a power of their own. For this reason, I am not satisfied—glad as I am, though—with "deep ecology" alone (Warwick Fox et al.). It is not the Earth that needs treatment. *We* are the patients. We need *ecosophy*.

Ecosophy stands for a radical change in our perception of both the Earth and Man—and, I will add, the Divine. The three are intrarelated. The word wants to convey not just the idea of our *logos* applied to our *oikos*, our reason applied to our world, but to communicate the intuition that neither anthropocentrism nor rationalism (even in the best sense of the word) do justice to our problem. The *oikos* is not our private habitat; it is the home of all beings, the *bhumi* of the *Atharva-veda* hymn, in which the Divine also inhabits.

¹ And yet I cannot resist the temptation of quoting the *Seven Lamps of Architecture* by John Ruskin, an art critic of the Victorian era. By "lamps" he means that which should illuminate the mind of an architect. They are: sacrifice, truth, power, beauty, love, memory, and obedience. The resemblance is striking. (Quoted in A. I. Kahera, "Gardens of the Righteous: Sacred Space in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam," *Cross Currents* 52, no. 3 [Autumn 2002]: 328).

The *oikos* of *ecosophy* changes radically the notion of Earth, both in its geological and in its anthropological meaning. It is not just the astronomical planet Earth of the "scientific" universe, nor is it the total horizon of human consciousness (*à la* Husserl, Jaspers, or Heidegger, for instance, with due respect and admiration for these thinkers). The *oikos* of which we try to decipher its *sophia*, or rather to participate in her wisdom, is closer to the divine *kosmos* of the pre-Socratics or the reality of the *Nasadiyásúkta* and *Puruṣásúkta*, the two famous hymns of the *Rg-veda*: it is the entire reality in which we live and are. It is similar to the *ras* of the *vedic* insight, the dynamic totality of all the processes of reality. Ecosophy is real *sophia*, authentic wisdom.

The ancients were not altogether wrong, believing that the Earth was the center of the universe. They were only astronomically mistaken, just as modern people are still geometrically misled, as if the postulates of our mind were truly cosmic categories. Man is not the physical center nor is his *logos* the lord, and yet human consciousness is an indispensable parameter. Metaphors could be misleading. Obviously, the human individual is not the center of the universe. In a purely astronomical universe of simple matter, it would be ridiculous to put the human body at the center, just as in an individualistic egalitarian democracy the voice of one individual is a *quantité négligeable* in front of six billion other individuals. Ecosophy contests all those myths.

The "wisdom of the Earth" implied in the word *ecosophy* entails both a subjective and an objective genitive. Ecosophy is both *our* wisdom (knowledge) about the Earth and the wisdom of the Earth herself, which discloses itself unto us once we are open to understanding it, that is, to stand-under the spell of what she is revealing to us. Ecosophy is the Earth's proper wisdom, not just (human) technical know-how.

Our present anthropocentric culture has little difficulty in accepting that we need to refine *our* vision of an (abstract) object (objective genitive) called world or even universe. On the other hand, the subjective genitive of the inherent wisdom of the Earth requires a less anthropocentric and epistemic view of the universe, without however subscribing to a magical worldview. Our human knowledge resides in us, but our knowledge is not our private property, nor is it just a purely objective knowledge of anything. If the world were not knowable, we could not know it; and this knowability resides precisely in the world and not in us. Reality is cosmotheandric (theanthropocosmic) and everything is connected with everything. We are not just mere spectators of a dead reality.

The word *sophia* reminds us that *ecosophy* is neither sheer "poetry," mere "romanticism," nor pure "reason" (rationalism)—using these words in their common (nonphilosophical) understanding. *Sophia* is wisdom (*prajñā*), knowledge that includes both poetry and reason. It is not a "primitive," "pre-logical" approach to reality, as modern anthropologists used to describe the worldviews of the prescientific era. Nor is it the fruit of an autonomous reason that is grounded upon itself and applies its laws to the Earth. Perhaps we *should have gone* through those strata, which are still visible in our *paleo-technological* *anthrópos*. Our relationship with the Earth is neither monistic nor dualistic, but *Advaitic*. The fact is, however, that we have to overcome both irrationality and rationalism without falling into an equally one-sided postrationalistic modernity. Reason is not our only point of reference. We cannot assume, without falling into a vicious circle, that the thinking laws of our mind apply also to the Earth.

Ecosophy suggests that the source of feeling, acting, and knowing is not in Man alone, although it is mainly in and through us that the Earth expresses her "feelings, actions, and thoughts." I should emphasize here that overcoming autonomous anthropocentrism should not lead us to heteronomous cosmocentrism—or theocentrism, for that matter. This is

why I speak of an *ontonomous cosmotheandric* intuition. *Kosmos, theos, anthrōpos* are the three constitutive dimensions of the Real, the center being nowhere, the master being no one. I recall the second sentence in the once famous *Book of the XXIV Philosophers*: "Deus est sphaera infinita cuius centrum est ubique, circumferentia nusquam" (God is an infinite sphere whose center is everywhere, and whose circumference nowhere).

I insist, once again, that the present-day situation demands radical measures, not just technological mendings; it demands more than "well-intentioned" reforms; it calls for a total *metanoia*, a transcending of the *nous*, an overcoming of the *manas*, the mental. It requires *sophia, prajñā, buddhi*, wisdom, enlightenment, discernment—*bandham-mokṣam* (freedom from bondage), as one could interpret the *Bhagavad-gītā* (XVIII.30). It goes without saying that the alternative is not the one dialectical thinking would put, that is, irrationalism.

The word *ecosophy* suggests a wisdom of which we are not the owners. This wisdom (*prajñā*) comes from reality itself, the *vedānta* would say; from the heavenly spheres, Plato would affirm; or from God's creation, monotheism would defend. The modern split between epistemology and ontology has turned the former into anthropocentric idolatry and the latter into uncritical superstition. The word "idolatry" may sound too strong, and a milder word may suffice. However, if epistemology has no further referent than itself, then the *épistème* is based on itself, be it evidence or whatever. In other words, it becomes an Absolute, and this is the ultimate meaning of idolatry. On the other hand, if we rely on the *n*th Being (of ontology) without analyzing our power of knowledge or its source, without any scrutiny, we fall into superstition.

We touch the limits of the *humanum*. And here is where *ecosophy* leads us to: the discovery of our contingency, the awareness of our real situation: "Where are the hidden traces of the Gods?" asks a *Rg-vedic* hymn (I.164.5). "Or, may it be that He who surveys the highest heaven, does not know?" comments one of the most quoted hymns of that tradition (*RV*X.129.7).

Could it not be that the highest dignity of Man lies in being aware of his own ignorance—as many Christian mystics affirm?

I mention this thought just to show that *ecosophy* is not a minor appendix to ecology. Our human destiny is involved. But I do not pursue this further here.

The *épistème* of modern science, having cut its links with ontology, has to justify itself, and can only do so by showing its positive results: the technological achievements. It was the technocratic dream, before it became reality (or nightmare), that paved the way to the scientific ideal that preceded modern technology. Modern science is intrinsically compelled to technocracy. Epistemology, once severed from ontology, needs a foundation in itself. The power of technology (technocracy) offers a plausible substitute: it "works," it "helps," it is "useful." And this is the justification of pragmatism. From the divinization of Reason brought about by the European "Enlightenment," we have logically come to the absolutization of the Rational, which creates the modern situation. The Megamachine is its result, be it called Universe, Man, Civilization (or even God, with the ridiculous title of Supreme Engineer).

On the other hand, the *ontology* of modern Western (post-Cartesian) philosophies, once severed from a critical theory of knowledge (epistemology), had to develop a blind trust in tradition, in a resentful criticism of modern techno-science, in the inertia of the mind, under the weight of the past. It had to postulate a God that, once made dependent on our proof about it, demands a further reason that we cannot furnish. This way, God becomes a superfluous hypothesis—or a superstition, as we said, if we cling to it.

Now, instead of following in this vein, I briefly unfold a threefold question that indirectly clarifies our issue.

Politics

While *ecology* looks for the best means to do business as usual, because "we cannot turn back the clock of Evolution," and thus looks desperately for a "sustainable development" (as the phrase goes), *ecosophy* contests such an approach.

Ecosophy is ultimately incompatible with any kind of radical development, be it technological, soft, sustainable, or whatever else. The very word betrays its bias: living beings grow, do not "develop." Indeed, a certain "progress" within specific limits is an undeniable fact. Our question is deeper. The very archetypes underlying the idea of development imply a mechanical anthropology that proves inadequate for three-quarters of the world population. The present notion of development simply means technical development. I submit that its introduction provides a Trojan horse, with a handful of "business executives" in its belly who try to convince the rest of the world to feed the markets of the "developed world," because "without us," "they" (the "third world") can no longer "develop," and it will die. I am not criticizing a certain notion of improvement in human life individually, collectively, and even historically. I am criticizing the archetype as the ideal for human life, especially in its political undertones.

To accept uncritically the slogan of "sustainable development" means to start the alienating course of the "third world," which should be better called "two-thirds" world. This "third class" world, at any rate, will only play the second fiddle in any kind of "development." It is in fact an imported phenomenon, not connatural to the non-Western psyche in general. Not without cause is the technological civilization the creation (extraordinary, if one looks at it alone) of one single (Western) culture.

One does not need to be an expert, or a prophet of doom, in order to see that the gap between rich and poor widens both between nations and within them, and leads the Earth to be slaughtered by the technologically strongest specimens of the human species—even sheer intelligence is a force. The data are well known. Let us recall only a few figures: in the year 2003, over 12 million children under the age of five died of hunger because of an avoidable poverty (thirty-four thousand every day); 1.3 billion people lived in "absolute destitution." Besides the 200 million people killed by genocides and wars in the twentieth century, in the year 2000 alone an extra 1.5 million people died of violence, and so on.

It all hangs together. Development is neither a universal nor a neutral value. It is ideologically biased, and serves only the interests of that particular civilization that advocates it. To envisage no other alternative to development is simply a modern form of colonialism. I repeat that the essence of colonialism is not the exploitation of other peoples, but monoculturalism, that is, the belief that one single culture sets the pattern and offers the theoretical solutions to human problems. Colonialism is not a moral evil, it is an intellectual error, and today a political mistake.

The idea of development has an underlying anthropology that sees Man as a bundle of potential needs, which require only to be developed in order to make life happy and meaningful. Development assumes that Man develops in the same manner as the material universe unfolds in evolution. No wonder that development leads to more or less ruthless competition for the survival of the fittest—not necessarily the best. There is something fundamentally wrong with the ideology of development. Once the rhythms are broken and we live in a closed system (given that the Earth is practically a closed system), any artificial development on one side will be at the expense of another. Any technological "improvement" on the micro level will have negative repercussions on the macro level: the richer "we" become, the poorer "they" will be. This is simply an empirical fact.

Let us imagine a totally different universe, sensitive to words like awakening, enlightenment, realization, illumination—without any need now to refer to *bhodi* (*bodhisattva*), *vikāśa*, *prabhu*, *prakāśa*, and many other notions of the Indic traditions—just to give one example. Each one of these names opens up a different universe. Awakening, for instance, is not a competitive concept, not denigrating like the present-day “official” designations, which shamelessly speak of “underdeveloped” countries and, to make things worse, condescendingly call them “on the way to development,” so as to give them an expectation that they are also going to make it, while knowing all too well that this is neither possible nor desirable. If the world consumed the amount of paper the United States does, in two years there would be no single tree left on the planet. In 2004 India there are 8 cars per one thousand people, against the 487 in the United States—and one car, from an ecological viewpoint, amounts to the pollution produced by 15 children of the “developed countries” in five years. The car explosion is more frightening than the population explosion.

I am not going to explain the connotations and consequences of the notion of *awakening*. It suffices to say that, for the Indic tradition, *vidyā*, *mokṣa*, *ānanda*, *jīvanmukta*, *sānti*, *brahmajñāna*, and the like are fundamental categories. If we ban all these notions from public and political life, and keep them just for the intimacy of the hearth, I wonder if we have not already killed Hindū *dharma* and succumbed to a most desacralized ideology.

The notion of eosophy transcends not only the nation-state ideology but also the idea of sovereign nationalisms. The biological realm does not have fixed, much less artificial frontiers. The biomes are often intertwined, or rather flow imperceptibly into each other like the colors of the rainbow. If Man also is an “animal,” that is, a living being enlivened by an *animus*, he cannot dissociate himself from the animal kingdom without harming himself. If we abuse or destroy the Earth, ultimately we abuse or destroy ourselves. The relationship is constitutive.

The political consequences are obvious. We cannot go on like this without destroying ourselves. *Growth* knows homeostasis; *development* cannot stop on its own—and violence is not the solution. This is the dilemma, and our predicament. Eosophy requires another conception of polities. The *polis* also belongs to the *oikos*.

Science

It is encouraging to see that people from the West, and even more significantly from the scientific community, begin to take seriously that millennial belief of the peoples of the Earth that goes under the pejorative name of “animism.” Everything is alive, and the Earth herself has a soul, that is, a life of her own. I use the word “animism” in the traditional sense that a divine principle, animating reality, is immanent to the world, or rather to nature. Life, *anima*, *psyche*, is not an accident to reality, an epiphenomenon in one corner of one of the many universes; it is an essential attribute of the Real. Besides the Indic notions mentioned above, we also have the classical conception of *āyus* (lifetime), *caitanya* (conscious universal soul), *asu* (*asudhārana*) (human-cosmic life), and many others. They indicate not only the energy-loaded character of the universe, but its life, and life that is divine. Western and Christian pantheistic fears notwithstanding. The widespread belief of the *anima mundi* was never condemned by the Christian Church. It was only pointed out that this *anima*, this soul, should not be identified or confused with the Holy Spirit.

Eosophy treats the Earth as a living being, both in all its members and as a whole. The question is not merely whether it is right to torture animals because this may prove “useful” to human life. The issue is the very methodological approach to matter and the physical world, whose names—*physis*, *natura*, *bhūmi*—already mean something begotten, alive. The

logos, by which everything was made, was life (*ζεῖ*), says the beginning of John's Gospel. It goes without saying that not every life is the same. Human life is not like the life of a plant, but the entire reality is a living organism, to which we also belong. I like to quote from a Christian saint, Bernard of Clairvaux, almost a century earlier than Francis of Assisi, who did dare to write, "Ligna et lapides docebunt te, quod a magistris audire non potes" (The woods and stones will teach you what cannot be heard from the masters). Nature is alive, and we have to listen to it.

Ecosophy dares to contest the greatest idol of our century: Modern Science. Let me clarify that, when I say *modern* science, I do not mean science as such, but the specific features of nowadays science, without denying the authentic knowledge it still conveys.

My provocative statement, which I have expounded time and again, is that modern science is "perverse"—not morally perverse, of course. It has perverted, to begin with, the very name of science, which meant *scientia, gnōsis, jñāna*, that is, identification and liberating communion with the thing being known, and thus intrinsically uniting with it through love. Traditionally, knowledge meant the power (cf. *Erkenntnis*, from *können, kennen*) to be identified with and to assimilate (*jñā*) the known thing. It implied the threefold activity by which Man is a human being: to know, to love (will), and to act, that is, to discern, to make the right choice, and to put it into practice. This knowledge has a saving power. The ideal of wisdom, *sapientia, jñāna* still conveys this triple power; whereas modern science is mere calculus, fascinating and useful as it may be, but it has no saving power any longer.

Second, modern science is based on a method of quantification and experimentation, and therefore needs an external control. Modern science had to wait until 1927 (Heisenberg) to discover that any observation modifies the observed thing; that any knowledge "touches" the known thing, which was the common belief of most traditional cultures. The sage had not only "knowledge," he also had power, because he "knew," and knowledge meant communion with reality. Ecosophy does not approach living beings as inert and inanimate "matter"; it respects their spontaneity while acknowledging the *hierarchical order* of reality (to kill a mosquito is not the same as to eliminate a human being). Or, in philosophical language, we cannot extrapolate from science to metaphysics, not even from the knowledge of *how* things react to the knowledge of what they *are*. Matter herself is alive. The very notion of life is not limited to the *bios* of plants and animals. Therefore, any solely mechanical approach to matter is methodologically flawed.

I certainly do not contest scientific results. I criticize the extrapolation of the scientific method to other areas of reality. Law courts have been legally wringing confessions through torture for centuries, and I suspect that many of those confessions were true—like scientific facts!

Undoubtedly, it is all about what life, human life in particular, is for. This is why the problem is not technical or merely scientific. It is a religious problem, inasmuch as religion touches the inmost core of Man, dealing as it is with ultimate issues.

I am not saying we should not "modernize" ourselves, or change. On the contrary, I am affirming that those questions are not solved by "cosmetic" changes, and that they require an experience of what reality and human life are all about.

Third, modern science assumes certain notions of matter, energy, life, space, and time, which are at loggerheads with African and Asian cultures, and alien to the deep-rooted archetypes of the peoples of those continents, who are not going to be creative within such a foreign framework. Saying that India, for instance, also has good scientists in the modern sense of the word misses the point altogether because it is not a question of individual abilities. It is a matter of the survival of the other world cultures and religions—a "survival" that can only make sense if the life of such cultures or religions is not assimilated.

lated into the so-called higher civilizations and major religions—as a certain colonialist mentality would defend.

Modern science is a sufficiently important feature of our world so as to allow to treat it lightly. We should consider a double hypothesis.

a. If techno-science were only a specialty, we could dispense with it, but it has become an indispensable specialty. Then we are at the mercy of those specialists. This syndrome simply repeats the centuries of domination of a privileged caste over the rest of humanity, with two aggravating factors. *First*, traditional societies recognized a hierarchical order, and thus the power of the elite was believed to have a divine sanction—which in its turn made it less whimsical (kings, priests, brahmans, and the like, had to respect a certain given order). *Second*, the might of the scientific caste today yields a power over life and death immensely superior to any other caste of any other period of human memory. An electrical blackout in a megalopolis, or a visit to any modern hospital or military base, is enough to grasp what this power is like. It is one thing to be inter-independent (*pratityasamutpāda, karman*), it is quite another thing to be totally dependent (in bondage).

But if modern science is *not* an indispensable specialty, and we are still making use of it, we find ourselves in a situation of collective compulsion, not unlike a drug addiction. A drastic treatment is needed, and the process of recovery will be long and painful. The proliferation of alternative movements, as well as the revival of fundamentalist ideologies, may be explained as impatient reactions to this state of affairs.

b. If, on the other hand, modern science is not a specialty acquired through a fragmentation of knowledge, but a definitive gain for the entire humankind, something universal and for everybody, then we need a "crusade" not to *educate* (*e-ducere*: bringing forth from the inner recesses of the psyche), but to free the peoples of the "third world" from all their "prejudices," notions of reality, and worldviews, so that they be converted, mentally circumcised, and initiated to the one Science "outside which there is no salvation." Then we should give up all romanticisms and eradicate all those "primitive" notions of time and space, even of the meaning of human existence, and "convert" them to the modern scientific ideology.

I am only saying that if we believe that modern science is the Answer to the world problems, we should defend its cause consciously, and not uncritically. We should not take it for granted, and thus unwillingly undermine the very fabric of all the other cultures of the world. We should put the problem on this level, and nothing short of it will do justice to the predicament of the non-Western cultures. Indeed, change, modernization, and even progress should not be synonymous with alienation, abjuration, and denial of one's own identity, but on the contrary, real progress and improvement. It is an irony of history that now that the "fulfillment theology" is disappearing, modern science inherits the same archetype.

The question is to examine whether modern science is really universal, "catholic," or whether it is historically bound to a very particular cultural context, and it presupposes a set of beliefs, assumptions, postulates, or principles that are alien to and incompatible with the *ethos* and *pathos* of other cultures. The question is to ask whether the underlying presuppositions of modern science are at all compatible with the worldviews and reality-experiences of those cultures. And the answer is clear. If the worldview of modern science represents a real improvement, the "underdeveloped" and "primitive" peoples will lose nothing in letting themselves be inserted into a "higher" civilization. We should only proceed tactfully, sympathetically with those old habits.

This is the implicit belief on development, under the name of modernization. I, on the contrary, assert, in short, that modern science is neither neutral nor universal, which are the core claims of colonialist belief. Myths die harder than rational ideas.

Ecosophy cuts the Gordian knot of our modern "scientific" entanglement by making most scientific concerns secondary or irrelevant. If life—and life to the full—means to know and to share, in a human way, the wisdom of the Earth and the mysteries of the Real in order to grant Man a full participation in the adventure of Reality, then we do not need most of the data and skills with which modern science stuffs our brains and hearts.

Here, like elsewhere, it is not a matter of repressing scientific curiosity or rejecting scientific methods. It is a matter of losing interest in such things without reverting, of course, to obsolete obscurantisms and uncritical views. The challenge is enormous, but the situation demands that we face it. Here is the proper place of religion: to disclose to us the sense of life—its meaning, I would say, if the word were not too rational. Now, the intellectual side of religion is precisely the issue of our third comment: philosophy.

Philosophy

Ecosophy has still another revolutionary germ. It overthrows not only the Western belief in progress but, together with it, the underlying myth of history (one of the most fundamental myths of the predominant Western culture), closely tied to the monotheistic religions. This goes together with the very notion of development and modern science. *Progress, history, development, and modern science* form the cultural package of Western culture. The four are intrinsically related.

In order to make a long and complex story very short and simple, I sum it up in the notion of "directional time."

The modern and prevalent conception of time is well expressed with two images: the simile of the *arrow* and the metaphor of *progress*.

The image of the arrow has permeated every field into which the modern mechanized and scientific civilization has penetrated. It has pervaded our minds all the more subtly the less it has been explicitly stated, for it looks as it were connatural to modern civilization. According to this conception, time always has a goal and goes somewhere: the future, of course. It is irrelevant whether this arrow goes straight, makes meanders, or even curves and eventually turns cyclically. It remains an arrow that hits (or fails to hit) a target. Whether it is heaven above, a perfect society ahead of us, happiness straightaway, nothingness, or death, the time-arrow always flies toward a linear future.

For other cultures, time is not an arrow; it cannot be symbolized by an arrow "progressing" toward a future. Furthermore, *real* time cannot be measured because, as the ancients knew, time is the "foundation of all worlds" (*AVXIX.54.4*), the origin of everything (*AVXIX.53*), into which all things dissolve (*MaitU1.4*), "the revealer of all things" (Gaudapāda); "time is the very life of Being" (Hesychius). Time is another name for life and for Being, seen under an essentially—but not uniquely—human perspective, which is precisely the temporal. But I skip here further reflections on time.

Our main question refers to the fact that modern science can operate only with linear time, that is, with time being related to the movement of bodies going somewhere. The link, discovered by Kant, between space and time betrays his interest in furnishing a basis for the, at his time incipient, modern science. In other words, scientific time is spatial time, spatially measurable time—the vibratory movement of elementary particles being no exception. Modern science is proud when it discovers a direction, a goal in time, and eventually an initial time: a

"Big Bang" and an Omega Point in all that is temporal. Because of sociological reason, that is, the spectacular triumph of modern science, this scientific time has become the practically universal paradigm for time. We feel "real" insofar as we are "on the go," as we run (or walk) toward a future, or live eschatologically.

There are, of course, possibilities of regressions. But modern Man lives for the future, the present is only an intermediate stage, a preparation for the next step, be it growing up or becoming saints (being saved), or paving the way for our children or for the future of our family, clan, country, science, humanity, or the cosmos. *Homo viator*, or rather *itinerans*. As the *vedānta* would say: we are pilgrims, and thirsty pilgrims at that, only insofar as we have not realized that there is no pilgrimage because the "goal" is already here and now—a nonscientific "here and now," of course. The essence of the way lies in the going, not in its goal; the *telos* is in the mind only. In a word, there is no real time-arrow.

Progress is our second image, related to the first. History is then the temporal riverbed where events occur, flowing in one direction toward an eschatological sea—of Divinity, nothingness, classless society, realization, or whatnot. Point Omega, with capital O when referring to the cosmos, or in lower case, when dealing with individual lives, seems to dominate every existence. We are all running toward an end, calling it by any degrading or lofty name: "way to heaven" or *Sein zum Tode* (being for death).

Ecosophy contests this view. I may clothe it in an intercultural garb and in a philosophical costume; we have already said, anyway, that ecosophy implies a radically different worldview.

The Hindū, and even more pointedly the Buddhist, experience of life, is that *life is life*, and does not need to be justified by what we do or where we go, by success or failure. The ideal is not to reach heaven or whatever, but to get out of *samsāra*, to jump out of the circle, to overcome inauthenticity, *avidyā*, ignorance. *Nirvāṇa* is not the goal, the aim, the end, the destination, the *telos* of Man. Otherwise, how could the very desire of it make it impossible, as the Buddha tirelessly repeats? You enjoy life, you live life, you suffer life, you escape time, you may even come back, eventually, but you do not go anywhere. *Brahmaloka* is only for the time being, is part of the process—perhaps to give us a new chance to escape the arrow of time. Whether our life is short or long is secondary to whether we really live or not. Work-ethos, sense of history, of purpose, time as a highway leading somewhere, are alien and alienating factors to the Indic *psychē*. *Tat twam asi*, "you (already) are that"—not "you will be it."

From a philosophical point of view, I would say that the very essence of time consists in rhythm, because this is the very nature of reality. Reality is rhythmic. Rhythm goes nowhere, it has no *telos*. The "final cause" is only secondary. Otherwise, freedom would also be secondary, and Truth could not set us free.² We are dealing with the very core of Western civilization.

Coming to our topic, time is an attribute of the Real, a feature inherently grafted onto any being inasmuch as it is real. If historical time were going somewhere, we would begin to realize that it is heading toward a catastrophe: death or Armageddon. Time is rhythmic, it moves, it dances, it is always new and always the same, or rather it is neither different nor equal because there is no underlying platform from where identity and difference could make sense. Śiva is Nātarāja, the Lord of Dance, and dance is the incarnation of rhythm.

The Indic *ethos* has lived time as the great cosmic dance, and our human temporal existence as our participation in it for the *time being*, that is, for our *being in time*. Otherwise, life would be unbearable.

² See Jn 8:32.

Putting it quite existentially: what is the meaning of life for that immense majority of people who do not "make it"? For all those who do not survive, for the downtrodden, the exploited, the poor? Not only in periods of war is the law of victors in force!

Today the Abrahamic *phylum* of human culture asks whether there can be a God, a God of history, after Auschwitz, Hiroshima, and all the *gulags*, Guantanamos, volcanoes, and earthquakes. For most peoples of the Earth, the aborigines, the slaves, the outcasts, the starving people, the sick, the oppressed, history has always been a "valley of tears." True hope cannot concern the future: it must refer to the invisible, to another dimension that makes life worth living even if I live under exploitation. To make a virtue out of necessity must not turn into a vice. But, for the oppressed people, it is the only chance of keeping their human dignity. One can well understand that to proclaim, "All will be well" in a near or distant future amounts to a mockery in the ears of the victims—including an eschatological future in an afterlife. I repeat that hope concerns the invisible, not future.

Progress tries to make us believe that we have to go somewhere, that we are runners in a race, maybe not about weapons and competition, but anyway a race toward a problematic and difficult victory—as if any *kuruksētra* (battlefield) were necessarily a *dharmakṣetra* (field of the *dharma*) (*BG* I.1). Modern education is structured so as to give a purpose, a goal to life. We are in a hurry in order to reach partial goals. Not by chance is acceleration the great invention of modern science. And paradoxically, since everything is seen as a means to reach an end, we get entangled in the means, ever busy with more and more sophisticated means. Modern civilization is a civilization of instruments, of means.

The attitude we just described in no manner justifies the opposite mood of indifference, *fuga mundi*, and fatalism—which are real dangers, as the opposite worldview coming out of a dialectical reaction.

* * *

I have resisted the technological temptation of jumping to find solutions instead of simply solving the problem by dissolving it. The solvent here is the traditional vision of life as rhythm. The Dance of Śiva! The solvent is not an idealistic vision of the past, nor blindness to the present. We certainly must acknowledge that the question is about the very meaning of life. And this is the place for philosophy.

Modern Man suffers an atrophy of that "third sense" about which most cultures still sing, and which makes life still worth living. "Immortal life" does not mean an existence without end, but eternal life lived in our *tempiernity*.

I mentioned at the beginning that *ecosophy* is not another paradigm. It is an (immediate) experience of the (ultimate) reality of the world as our habitat and the very dwelling place of (divine) Life. We need to learn and live without paradigms, without imitating or following a model. If our hearts are not pure, it is better to have a paradigm, better crutches than paralysis, indeed, better the light of reason than the darkness of irrationalism. Yet we should not forget that the "lesser evils" have often been the justification for the greatest evils.

Ecosophy is not a new paradigm. It is a reminder that the *oikos* of *ecosophy* is an ultimate dimension of that which I have called the *radical Trinity* or the *cosmotheandric* vision, in which the *kosmos*, together with *theos* and *anthrōpos*, belongs to the ultimate structure of Reality.

I may here elaborate a single philosophical point. After the brilliant revolution of Kant, epistemology has taken the lead before ontology. But in such a case, we revert to the old and honorable dogma of Parmenides, which, with remarkable qualifications, has dominated the West for twenty-six centuries.

Epistemology became the "queen of philosophical sciences." Traditional philosophy was based on Being. Epistemology is grounded on critical knowledge. Being was considered an Ultimate. Now epistemology is based on itself, be it called evidence, "clear and distinct ideas," or Absolute Idealism. In other words, human knowledge becomes an Ultimate. This is what would be called the idolatry of epistemology.

But our human and noble faculty of thinking is "pious," that is, it asks for an Ultimate. "Das Fragen ist die Frömmigkeit des Denkens"³ (Heidegger). Now the foundation of knowledge can only be knowledge itself: knowledge based on knowledge, which is a vicious circle. Human knowledge then becomes an ultimate reality, and leaves no room for pluralism. Not by chance do all monotheisms affirm that God is absolute Knowledge. The difficulty arises when we claim to be His interpreters, or even the interpreters of the Promise (to be the *right* interpreters). All idols—even if we call them icons—have feet of clay.⁴

Here is the philosophical place for ecosophy: the Earth, matter, the universe are constitutive parts of that trinitarian Ultimate that I have called the cosmotheandric Reality. This vision does not make of Matter an Ultimate, nor of God alone, or of Knowledge. The Ultimate (if we want to use this word, because we have to stop somewhere) is the trinitarian relationship between these three constitutive dimensions of the Real, in which any dimension is irreducible to the others, and therefore incomparable.

We simply accept our human condition; and in it we discover Truth, Beauty, and Peace—without falling into the temptation of our Forefathers.

³ "It is questioning that is the piety of thought."

⁴ See Dan 2:33.



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GLOSSARY

All terms are Sanskrit or English unless otherwise specified.

ādhibidaivika: pertaining to the *ādhibidaiva*; that which transcends common experience, the suprasensory; that which regards the microcosm.

ādhyātmika (from *ādhyātmika*): qualification applied to spiritual life which leads to self-awareness (*ātman*), to the inner experience corresponding to the deepest dimension of our being.

advaita: non-dualism (*a-dvaita*). Spiritual intuition that sees ultimate reality as neither monistic nor dualistic. The recognition that the merely quantitative problem of the one and the many in dialectical reasoning does not apply to the realm of ultimate reality. The latter, in fact, possesses polarities that cannot be divided into multiple separate units; not to be confused with monism.

agnihotra: the daily fire sacrifice performed morning and evening in all homes of the high castes, which consists of an oblation of milk sprinkled on the fire.

agorā (Gr.): public square where the townsfolk gathered and held meetings in ancient Greece.

aham: "I," first-person pronoun. *Aham* as ontological principle of existence is generally distinguished from *ahamkāra* as a psychological principle.

anātman: absence of *ātman*, of the substantiality of an individual ontological Self.

anubhava: direct experience, knowledge deriving from immediate spiritual intuition.

arunkudita: elementary form of primitive religious life.

āshram: spiritual community, generally under the guidance of a *guru* or spiritual master. Also a stage of human life.

asu: life, vitality, both physical and spiritual.

asura: spiritual, incorporeal, divine. In the *Rg-veda* the highest spirit, God (from *asu*, life, spiritual life). *Varuṇa* is considered an *asura*. Later the meaning changes completely and *asura* (now analyzed as *a-sura*, or "non-God") takes on the meaning of demon or evil spirit constantly opposed to the *deva* (*Brahmāṇya*).

ātman: principle of life, breath, the body, the Self (from the root *an*, to breathe). Refers to the whole, undivided person and also to the innermost center of man, his incorruptible nucleus, which in the *Upaniṣad* is shown to be identical to Brahman. The Self or inner essence of the universe and man. Ontological center in Hinduism, which is negated in Buddhism.

āyus: vital force, vitality, life, temporal existence, the length of life granted to man. See Gr. *aiōn*, aeons.

bhūmi: the earth; cf. *prthivī*.

bodhisattva: the enlightened one. In particular, in Mahāyāna Buddhism, he who, having attained liberation on earth, makes a vow to help all other beings attain liberation before they enter *nirvāṇa*.

brahman: prayer, sacrifice, the inherent power in sacrifice; the Absolute, the ultimate reason underlying all things; in the *Upaniṣad* it is identified with the immanent Self (*ātman*). Also, one of the four priests who perform the sacrifice or the clergy in general.

caitanya: pure, absolute Consciousness, Spirit, Intelligence. Synonymous with *cit* and *prajñāna*.

dao (Chin.): "way," central concept of Chinese philosophy, especially in Daoism.

dikṣā: initiation; the preliminary rites; consecration of one who performs the sacrifice, such as that celebrated, for example, at the beginning of the *soma* and leads to a "new birth." Out of the context of sacrifice *dikṣā* is the initiation of the disciple by the *guru* into *saṃnyāsa*, the life of the errant monk.

dēmos (Gr.): the common people.

deva: connected with *div*, heaven, light (Lat. *divus, deus*), heavenly, divine. Also, God, divinity, being heavenly, cosmic power. The *devas* are not at the same level as the one God (sometimes also called *deva*, singular, or *īśvara*) or of the absolute (Brahman). They are powers that perform different functions in the cosmos. Later also human senses are called *devat* in the *Upaniṣad* Ch. 1 SEz. 2.

devaloka: the world of the Gods.

dharma (*dharmma*): cosmic order, justice, duty, religious law, religious and social observances transmitted by tradition; "religion" as a collection of practices and laws. That which holds the world together.

dharmakṣetra: field of the *dharma*, the existential consciousness of experience and its transcendence.

dharmakāya: mystical body of *dharma* in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

dikaiosynē (Gr.): justice.

Eirēnē (Gr.): goddess of peace in Greek mythology.

entelecheia (Gr.): actualization of potential.

epistēmē (Gr.): science.

eschaton (Gr.): final, ultimate, both in terms of time (the final event, the end of the world) and of ontological importance (ultimate reality).

ethos (Gr.): customs, rules of life, practical conduct.

exousia (Gr.): power of choice, both physical and mental.

gnōsis (Gr.): saving knowledge, liberating wisdom. See *jñāna, prajñā*.

biranyagarbha: "the golden germ," a cosmological principle in the *Veda*, later identified with the creator (*Brahmā*).

hochma (Heb.): wisdom, knowledge.

homeomorphic: equivalent, that which performs the same function.

idiorhythmic: monastic lifestyle typical of orthodox monasteries on Mount Athos.

isonomia (Gr.): equality of rights before the law.

jīva: living being (from *jīv-*, to live); the soul in its individuality, as opposed to *ātman*, the universal soul. There are as many *jīva* as individual living beings.

jīvanmukta: "liberated while alive and embodied," the highest category of the holy or fulfilled person who has reached the destination in this life and, therefore, in the human body, he who has fulfilled his *ātman-brahman* ontological identity, he who has reached his own being, becoming totally integrate.

jīvātman: the *ātman* that is reflected in the *jīva* (the living being, the soul in its individuality).

jñāna: knowledge (from the root *jñā-*, to know), intuition, wisdom; frequently the highest intuitive comprehension, the attaining of *ātman* or *brahman*. *Jñāna* is the result of meditation or revelation. Cf. *jñāna-mārga*.

jñāna-mārga: the path of knowledge, contemplation and intuitive vision; one of the three classic paths of spiritual experience, generally considered superior to those of *karman* and *bhakti*, although many *bhakta* regard *jñāna* as merely as form of *bhakti*.

kosmos (Gr.): order, the ordered universe, the wholeness of the world.

kratos (Gr.): the power of the State.

kṣatriya: member of the second social order, which includes kings, warriors, and *Karman* nobility.

kurukṣetra: the battlefield where the war of the *Mahābhārata* was fought and where Kṛṣṇa revealed the *Bhagavad-gītā* to Arjuna.

lokasamgraha: the "keeping together, maintaining of the world" by the wise man and the saint through the sacred or liturgical action (concept of *Bhagavad-gītā*).

manas: mind in its broadest sense, heart, intellect, the internal organ that is the seat of thought, comprehension, feeling, imagination, and will. In Upaniṣadic anthropology *manas* is one of the three constituent principles of man (cf. *vāc*, *prāṇa*).

manusyaloka: the world according to the cosmological traditions of Jainism.

mokṣa: ultimate liberation from *samsāra*, the cycle of births and deaths, and from *karman*, ignorance and limitation: salvation. Homeomorphic equivalent of *sōteria*.

nirvāṇa: lit. "the going out (of the flame)," extinction. The word does not refer to a condition, but indicates liberation from all dichotomy and conditioning, whether it be birth and death, time and space, being and non-being, ignorance and knowledge, or final extinction including time, space, and being; the ultimate destination for Buddhism and Jainism.

noēsis noēsōs (Gr.): "the thinking of thinking," characteristic of the pure act or the Aristotelian prime mover.

ontonony: intrinsic connection of an entity in relation to the totality of Being, the constitutive order (*nomos*) of every being as Being (*on*), harmony that allows the interdependence of all things.

parousia (Gr.): the return, the presence, the second coming of Christ.

perichōrésis (Gr.): notion of the early Church Trinitarian doctrine describing the interpenetration of divine persons. Corresponds to the Latin *circumcessio*.

physis (Gr.): nature.

polis (Gr.): the city-state of ancient Greece.

politeuma (Gr.): belonging to the social body, political unit. Cf. *conversatio*.

pratityasamutpāda: Buddhist doctrine of the "conditioned genesis" or "dependent origination," which claims that nothing exists for itself but carries within itself the conditions for its own existence, and that everything is mutually conditioned in the cycle of existence.

psychē (Gr.): soul, psyche, heart, animated being.

purohita: priest, liturgy.

rājas: one of the three *gunas*; represents activity, energy, fire, warmth, desire, passion.

r̥ṣi: seer, sage, wise man; the poet-sages to whom the *Veda* were revealed. Regarded as a special class of beings, superior to men and inferior to the Gods. According to one tradition there were seven *r̥ṣi*, probably the seven priests with whom Manu performed the first sacrifice and the seven poet judges in the assembly. Their identification with the names of ancient seers and with the stars of the Ursa Major occurred later (*Brāhmaṇa*).

r̥ta: cosmic and sacred order, sacrifice as a universal law, also truth; the ultimate, dynamic, and harmonious structure of reality.

sādhu: straight, leading straight to the goal, good, just. A good person, renunciant, monk, or ascetic.

saeclum (Lat.): the human age, era, century; also spirit of the day.

saguṇa-brahman: Brahman with quality, corresponding in the Vedānta to *Uśvara*, the Lord.

salam: greeting.

sambogakāya: subtle plane on which every idea or psychic content is manifest through a form, a symbol.

sanātana-dharma: "law, eternal, imperishable religion," the name that Hinduism gives itself on the grounds of having neither founder nor temporal origin; the self-understanding of traditional religiousness in India.

sāmnyāśin: renunciant, ascetic; pertaining to the fourth stage or period of life (*āśrama*), to some the superior stage.

saṃsāra: the impermanent phenomenic world and the condition of identification with it, the temporal existence, the cycle of births and deaths, of conditioned existences; state of dependence and slavery.

śānti: peace, tranquillity, quiescence. The closing *mantra* of many prayers and oblations.

Santideva: eighth-century Buddhist monk and scholar venerated by Tibetans.

Sarvātman: the self in its totality.

satyasya satyam: the true truth, the true reality, the being of the existent.

Shalom (Heb.): Jewish greeting.

skambha: cosmic pillar, the stable and invisible support of the universe.

smṛti: lit. recollection, memory. Tradition; the Scriptures that follow śruti, such as epics (*itihāsa*), the books of the law (*dharma-sāstra*), etc., less authoritative than śruti itself, on which they are based.

sóteria (Gr.): salvation, liberation, redemption.

sóma (Gr.): body.

sóphrosyné (Gr.): wisdom, temperance.

śruti: "that which has been heard," the Vedic Revelation, an expression mainly used in sacred texts, Vedas, and other authoritative Hindu scriptures, which reveal to the human spirit the entire *corpus* of the *Veda* transmitted orally.

svadharma: intrinsic personal order, suited to one's own situation, caste, religion, etc.

svāmī: monk, ascetic, including teacher.

tapas: lit. heat; hence inner energy, spiritual fervor or ardor, austerity, asceticism, penitence. One of the forms of primordial energy, along with *kāma*.

tat tvam asi: "that is you," an Upanisadic expression meaning that *ātman* is ultimately Brahman.

One of the four Great Sayings (*mahāvākyāni*) of the *Upaniṣad*, as taught to Śvetaketu.

technē (Gr.): art, ability, handicraft.

tempiernity: nonseparation between time and eternity.

theologoumenon (Gr.): theological enunciation, result, and expression of the effort to understand faith and express a theological belief.

theopoiesis (Gr.): divinization

thèoreia (Gr.): theory; originally in the sense of "contemplation."

topos/topoi (Gr.): place/places.

tremendum—"*mysterium tremendum et fascinans*": famous definition of the Holy by Rudolf Otto.

triloka: the "triple world," totality of the universe, consisting in three realms: earth, atmosphere, and sky, or earth, sky, and the nether regions (later called Hell); the inhabitants of the three worlds are Gods, men, and demons.

uṣā-kala: he who calls the dawn.

yajñā: offering, oblation, sacrifice, but also worship, invocation or prayer.

vihāra: monastery, generally in Buddhism; Buddhist or Jain temple.

zōon politikon (Gr.): Aristotelian definition of Man as a social and political being.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

An international authority on spirituality, the study of religions, and intercultural dialogue, Raimon Panikkar made intercultural and dialogical pluralism one of the hallmarks of his research, becoming a master "bridge builder," tireless in the promotion of dialogue between Western culture and the great Oriental Hindū and Buddhist traditions.

Born in 1918 in Barcelona of a Spanish Catholic mother and an Indian Hindū father, he was part of a plurality of traditions: Indian and European, Hindū and Christian, scientific and humanistic.

Panikkar held degrees in chemistry, philosophy, and theology, and was ordained a Catholic priest in 1946. He delivered courses and lectures in major European, Indian, and American universities.

A member of the International Institute of Philosophy (Paris), of the permanent Tribunal of the Peoples (Rome), and of the UNESCO Commission for intercultural dialogue, he also founded various philosophical journals and intercultural study centers. He held conferences in each of the five continents (including the renowned Gifford Lectures in 1988–1989 on "Trinity and Atheism").

Panikkar received international recognitions including honorary doctorates from the University of the Balearic Islands in 1997, the University of Tübingen in 2004, Urbino in 2005, and Girona in 2008, as well as prizes ranging from the "Premio Menéndez Pelayo de Humanidades" for his book *El concepto de naturaleza* in Madrid in 1946 to the "Premio Nonino 2001 a un maestro del nostro tempo" in Italy.

Panikkar lived in Tavertet in the Catalonian mountains, where he continued his contemplative experience and cultural activities from 1982 until his death on August 26, 2010. There he founded and presided over the intercultural study center Vivarium. Panikkar published more than fifty books in various languages and hundreds of articles on the philosophy of religion, theology, the philosophy of science, metaphysics, and Indology.

From the dialogue between religions to the peaceful cohabitation of peoples; from reflections on the future of the technological society to major work on political and social intelligence; from the recognition that all interreligious dialogue is based on an intrareligious dialogue to the promotion of open knowledge of other religions, of which he was a mediator; from his penetrating analysis of the crisis in spirituality to the practice of meditation and the rediscovery of his monastic identity; from the invitation of *colligite fragmenta* as a path toward the integration of reality to the proposal of a new innocence, Panikkar embodied a personal journey of fulfillment.

Among his most important publications with Orbis are *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (1973), *Worship and Secular Man* (1973), *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (1981), *The Silence of God* (1989), *Cosmotheandric Experience* (1993), and *Christophany* (2004).

